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RED MAN'S LUCK

Constance Lindsay Skinner

Illustrated by
Caroline Gibbons Granger

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RED MAN'S LUCK

Chapter I

DANGER BREWING

"THAT lad's a born athlete," Macdonald muttered admiringly. The Factor stood in the yard watching a group of Indian boys at their winter sports. Behind him were the dwellings, storehouses, and big trading house of Little Fort William, the western headquarters of those stormy petrels of the North, the North-West Company, popularly called the Nor'-Westers. In front was the broad, snowy yard and, beyond it, the shimmering icy surface of Beaver Lake. Indian tents of buffalo hide made thick clusters of brown dots on the lake shore.

The younger generation was in full possession of the yard, which was a maze of snow houses, snow men, flying toboggans and snowshoes, flapping blankets and buckskin fringes, skimming snowsticks and arrows, jumping, tumbling, racing, wrestling bodies, with here and there the flash of bright feathers. The Factor had just

seen a slim, small youth make a long and beautiful running leap, seize a boy a head taller than himself, wrestle with him and throw him. Several times during the past ten months that the boy had lived at Little Fort William, Macdonald had marvelled at his speed, skill, and strength in the games and had wondered what his age was; and also who his parents had been, that he should have come into the world with the delicately cut features and finely formed hands and feet of an aristocrat and the natural bearing of a prince. He was white, unmistakably. The Piegans had told only the truth about that when they brought him here last spring. But they knew nothing more about him except that in the Indian country to the south he was called the Beloved Child and was believed to bring good fortune. They had captured him in a war and, two or three years later, brought him to Macdonald for safekeeping. Macdonald had named him William Luck. The white traders spoke of him as "Luck," and sometimes "Luck-o'-the-North," meaning about what the Indians meant when they said, "The Beloved Child." We would probably have called him "Mascot."

Though Luck looked about twelve, Macdonald thought he must be fourteen or fifteen. His

mind, however, was very young. It knew nothing that white boys know. It was like the mind of an intelligent Indian boy, who meant well to all the world and was afraid of nothing on earth—which really means that Luck used his intelligence and his powers of observation and avoided getting into situations which would make him afraid. That was one of the things about Luck which Macdonald—a Scot as wary, or "canny," as he was bold—liked. Luck also was canny as well as brave. He was very helpful to Macdonald because he understood Indians. Macdonald knew Indians pretty well, too, as a white man who had traded with them for years, but Luck knew them as an Indian boy who had been brought up in their tepees and had heard them talking freely among themselves about everything that interested them, including the white men in their own Northwest.

Macdonald wondered if Luck, who was now busy drawing pictures with the point of a stick on the side of a snow bank, had any secret thoughts about those thick clusters of tepees on the shore. The Factor himself had vague misgivings. It was December, Christmas Eve in fact; and that was too early for the Indians to bring in furs. They should have been out trap-

ping for a couple of months yet. Coming now, so early, of course they had brought only about half as many pelts as usual. Another thing that bothered Macdonald was that there were so few white men with him. The Nor'-Wester brigades would not come in till spring. There were a dozen clerks at the fort. And there were two guests. One of these was a Montreal partner named Frobisher, who had come into "le pays d'En Haut," as the *voyageurs* called the North, for the winter, bringing two young Scots with him. The other bore one of the greatest names among explorers. He was Sir Alexander Mackenzie, discoverer and explorer of the Mackenzie River, the first man to cross the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Mackenzie, some years ago, had left the New World to live his last years in Scotland, but he had come back to revisit the north, the scene of his great exploits. All told, there were less than twenty white men at Little Fort William. And there were over three hundred Indians, chiefly Piegans, Crees and Assiniboines, who, by all the laws of reason and economy, should have been miles away tending to their traps. To be sure, the Piegan Chief, Long Shadow, had given an explanation that sounded plausible and natural. The Indians had

come, he said, to take part in the great feast which the white men at the fort were to hold in honor of the Beloved Child. That might be quite true, Macdonald thought—but, was it?

As to the great feast—he smiled. Surely never had there been such a Christmas in the north, never such food, never such a Christmas tree, as were now prepared for William Luck, the boy who had never even heard of Christmas until this year. Frobisher and Sir Alexander had brought presents from Montreal. Every man at the fort had made something for him. The Indians had brought gifts. The splendid pine tree almost filled one end of the huge banquet hall. Pierre Begin, clerk, was even now coloring with red paint the hundred tall thick tallow candles which would light the hall, the table, and the tree. As to the cooks—three lordly French chefs, the best Montreal could supply—Macdonald would not have dared go near them today, Factor though he was. The kitchen, where Jean-Ba'tiste, Jean-Marie and Jean-Christophe, with their retinue of French half-breed sub-cooks, Indian fire-tenders, pan-runners and dish-washers, worked garrulously, their shrill voices shrieking in chorus as they gave com-

mands and countermands regarding how to trim the haunches of venison and the stuffed geese for the spit, how to boil plum puddings, make ineffable sauces, ice gigantic cakes, sounded to the Factor like a chicken yard gone frantic at the sight of hawks. "Bunny" MacFarlane, a clerk, who had won his nickname because his gun once kicked him over when he was aiming at a rabbit, had arranged a pageant with Highland songs and dances. Macdonald had donated a bolt of cloth for the costumes. All the native women servants were sewing like mad. And today Long Shadow had requested that some of the best Indian dancers be allowed to perform at Luck's feast. The chiefs, the Piegans' medicine man, and the most noted braves had, necessarily, been invited to the banquet. If the dancers came too there would be at least three savages to every white man in the banquet hall. It might be just as innocent and friendly as it looked—but Macdonald was worried. He caught the boy's eye and beckoned to him. Luck came skimming along over the crusty snow on his long, narrow, northern snowshoes, with the bright-eyed, smiling look with which he always ran to do any thing that anybody asked of him. Macdonald

briefly told him his doubts and asked him if he could find out whether the Indians had anything hidden in their minds.

Luck understood and spoke English fairly well, but he had been playing with the Indian boys all morning and so, quite naturally and without noticing it, he answered in Piegan:

"Don't be troubled. There can be nothing wrong. They only came to take part in my feast. The Piegans are my brothers. The great chief, Long Shadow, is my Indian father. I am the Beloved Child of all the red men."

Macdonald nodded, somewhat reassured, and went indoors.

Now, as it happened, Luck was more worried than Macdonald. Yet he should not be blamed for having answered evasively. He might have said:

"I believe that, as soon as the banquet is over and the dancing begins, the Indians mean to murder all the white men in the fort."

But he did not know what effect this would have on Macdonald. The Factor and clerks at Little Fort William were the only white men Luck had ever known, and he had not known them long. He felt that he did not under-

stand how white men's minds worked, and he felt, too, that even these white men, who had traded for years with the tribes, did not really understand Indians. The white men were brave and Macdonald was stern and masterful in his bearing, like Long Shadow of the Piegans and Kakama of the Assiniboines, as a great chief should be. But sometimes great chiefs did foolish things. For instance, Long Shadow's father had let the taunts of the foe drive him from his hiding place to be burned at the stake—just to prove he was no coward. The Piegans reverenced his memory and sang his last words as a war song—

> A storm of arrows will arise:
> Sioux will nevermore breathe the breath of day!

The old man's brave death was magnificent, and Luck thrilled to it. But a deep streak of hard sense in the boy made him feel that that sort of magnificence was generally unnecessary. Suppose Macdonald, realizing how hopelessly outnumbered the white men were, took the same course of splendid defiance—and death? No; without expressing it in exactly those words, Luck thought that if you knew people wanted to

murder you, the thing emphatically *not* to do was to make it easy for them. Better make it as hard as possible; better yet, prevent it entirely. He wanted to protect Macdonald.

He saw the matter from another side, too; as he thought the Factor could not, being a white man. For three years before coming to Little Fort William, Luck had lived with the Piegans as Long Shadow's son. He loved Long Shadow and he did not want him to get into trouble. What could be stupider than for Long Shadow and the other Indians to kill the white men who brought the good blankets and the rifles and the steel traps into their country? They would be sorry enough if they had to go hunting with bows and arrows again! And Long Shadow liked Macdonald and was proud of his friendship. After he had killed the Factor he would grieve; but what good would that do either of them? Luck wanted to protect Long Shadow from that.

And there was still another side, a very personal one. Luck was intensely proud, "like a born prince," as the Factor said; and like an Indian chief, too. He could not bear to be made ashamed. Now, here were notable guests to help celebrate his feast. One of them, the man named

Mackenzie, Luck thought, must be undoubtedly the greatest man in the world. Could there be anything more humiliating than to have this great man murdered at William Luck's first Christmas party? *There couldn't!* If his Indian kinsmen turned his party into a massacre, Luck felt that he would simply die of shame! He bit his lip and stamped his foot, snowshoe and all, at the bare idea of it. He told himself that, somehow, he *would* protect William Luck from *that!*

He must make haste to discover what the Indians intended. And he must be careful not to let the very few white men know, or they might march out singing death songs like Long Shadow's brave but unwise father. The thing, whatever it was, had to be stopped.

Naturally his thoughts turned to Long Shadow's elder brother, the medicine man. Old Three Eyes was at the bottom of most troubles. He was a crafty man, very conceited, very jealous for his fame and his influence, and he had his brother almost completely under his sway. Long Shadow was as fierce and cruel in war as any Piegan, and sometimes violent in his temper at home; but he was not really suspicious of other men's motives, and was not more treacherous by nature than any other well-meaning Piegan,

when his brother did not stir him. But today Luck had seen on Long Shadow's face the sullen brooding look which usually meant that Three Eyes had filled his mind with mischief. One of his Indian playmates, an Assiniboine boy, had informed him that Three Eyes had visited their medicine man during the autumn hunting season.

The boy had also said that the white men were no friends of the Indians or they would not keep the deadly spirit of the smallpox in a glass bottle in a little back room of the fort and let it out in hot weather to bring disease and death to the Indians. Luck guessed that Three Eyes had spent most of the autumn visiting the other tribes and arranging for the massacre! The Indians feared the smallpox more than anything else in the world; and unfortunately they had suffered from it last summer. As to the glass bottle, Luck knew that Charlie Dundas, one of the clerks, collected butterflies. Charlie liked to make a tiny bit of landscape of mosses and pebbles inside a large clear glass bottle and arrange his butterflies on it. Evidently, Three Eyes had seen one of these bottles and had at once concluded that it was evil magic. That was his way. He set down everything new

to him as evil magic. To him, a butterfly in the air or on a wild rosebush, where he had seen many before, was merely a butterfly; but a butterfly on a tree made of moss, and in a bottle, where he had never seen one before, was the spirit of the smallpox.

"Three Eyes is a nuisance!" Luck muttered in Piegan. Once he, too, had believed there was a smallpox spirit, but Macdonald had set him right on the matter, and now he felt very superior to the foolish shaman. The medicine man had used the smallpox scare, of course, to bring the Crees and Assiniboines into the plot. But Luck guessed that, back of it all, was his jealousy of Macdonald, because Long Shadow called him "White Brother," and all the tribes spoke of him as wise and mighty. Three Eyes could not endure hearing another man praised.

"Three Eyes is a nuisance!" Luck repeated crossly. He took off his snowshoes and stood them up against the log wall and went indoors.

He stole into Charlie's room at the back of the trading house. No one was about. Luck snatched up the bottle and, covering it with his fur coat, tiptoed out with it. He hid it away in his pile of presents beside the Christmas tree. Then he went outside, tied on his snowshoes and

put on his coat again, and trotted off toward the Indian tents. He did not know as yet what use he would make of the bottled butterfly; he had taken it only as a precaution. He would have to learn what the Indians' plans were before he could form his own.

Chapter II

LUCK'S CHRISTMAS SURPRISE

THE Cree tent village was the farthest off, about a mile from the fort. It occurred to him that he had seen very few of the Cree men out today, though he had observed groups of men going from the Piegan and Assiniboine tents toward the Cree village, carrying their rifles. He stopped suddenly and sat down behind a snowdrift to think. It had just struck him that three Assiniboines, who had passed close to the playground on their way *back* from the Cree tents, had carried no rifles.

It was too cold to sit, so Luck jumped up and moved on along the crest of the drift, still thinking hard. In a moment he caught sight of Curved Horn, a Piegan brave of great renown who was considered one of the best dancers. There was no doubt about it this time! An hour or so ago he had positively seen Curved Horn go toward the Cree village with his rifle

in full view. Now Curved Horn was returning with no rifle. Luck noted that he was holding his blanket tightly about him. Was he hiding something under his blanket? Not his rifle; it was too long. Those three Assiniboines, too, were among the best dancers of their tribe. Why were good dancers taking their rifles to the Cree village and leaving them there? And if they were bringing away something in place of them, what was it? Mystified, Luck trotted on. And, as he trotted, he mused that there were distinct practical advantages in being the Beloved Child. No matter what the Crees were doing they would be glad to have him visit their tents. He brought good luck to all. And that was what he intended, too. He was now busily engaged in stopping a massacre that would bring only *bad* luck to all!

As he drew near he heard a sharp zizzing sound. He knew instantly what it was. They were filing iron in those tents. He fairly flew over the snow and down upon the nearest tent. At the door he met an Assiniboine coming out with his rifle. For a moment the boy's eyes nearly popped out of his head at the sight of the rifle. The barrel had been filed off short. Luck quickly recovered himself, made a gesture of

greeting and, passing that tent which was noisy with the sound of files, went on to Chief Kitowa's.

Bending to take off his snowshoes, he saw, by a side glance, that the Assiniboine had secreted his sawed-off gun under his blanket and was tramping back to his own village.

So the dancers would come into the banquet hall tonight with sawed-off rifles under their blankets. And suddenly they would throw off their blankets and fire at the white men round the table! He reasoned that, for this coup to be successful, they must all act simultaneously. They could not be sure of doing so unless some signal had been decided on which they could all see instantly. Luck thought that the signal would almost certainly be given them by an Indian seated at the table. Three Eyes? No; Luck thought not. Three Eyes never did such things himself. It would be one of the chiefs, Kitowa, Kakama or Long Shadow. Most likely, Long Shadow, because the Piegans, under their shaman's suggestion, had originated the plot. And the jealous, sulky Three Eyes would want Long Shadow to give the sign which would bring death to his white brother, Macdonald. For the third time that day Luck said,

"Three Eyes is a *nuisance!*"

He stepped inside the tent. He saw at once that he had entered at a serious moment. The three chiefs sat on a couch of buffalo robes and each man's hand grasped a section of the famous six-foot peace belt of the Piegans. Before them, crouched on his haunches on the floor, was Three Eyes, with his witch mask and his medicine rattle. Taking in the scene at a glance, Luck responded to it. He drew his small figure erect against the tent flap, assumed an expression of stony dignity and lifted his right arm in the sign of peace, as if he were a chief entering a solemn council. Then he stepped forward and gravely shook hands with each man in turn. He seated himself beside the chiefs and laid his hand also on the great peace belt. As he did so, he noticed that the chiefs held it upside down. That could never happen from carelessness, he knew. It must have a deep significance.

"My father," he said to Long Shadow, "will you bring the great Piegan peace belt to my feast tonight and offer it to the white chiefs?" He saw that Three Eyes looked searchingly at him from under scowling brows.

"I will offer the great Piegan peace belt to the

white chiefs, but first to my white brother Macdonald," Long Shadow answered.

Here, evidently, was the sign he was seeking, but it was not clear yet.

"Shall you offer the belt when you enter the fort, or after we have eaten and the dance begins?" he queried innocently.

"After we have eaten and the white man's bellies are full and their hearts merry, and they wait to see the Indian dancers begin. I will rise in my place and speak, and I will offer the peace belt to Macdonald."

"Upside down," Three Eyes crooned suddenly, rocking violently and shaking his rattle. Across Long Shadow's dark face an expression of doubt, of trouble, passed.

"Upside down, it is one sign. Right side up, it is another. It is for me to decide," he said harshly. "The belt was Macdonald's gift."

"Yes," Three Eyes answered, "it is for you, Great Chief, to decide. But what chief is so powerful that he dares to defy the spirits? Listen once more, O Long Shadow, Kitowa and Kakama, to the voice of the spirits!" The upper part of his body swirled like a plant caught in a whirlwind. He shook his rattle, and his voice rose in a high shrill chant of meaningless

syllables, which he had long ago convinced the Indians was the language he had learned from spirits. Then he became utterly still and silent; in a listening attitude he waited for the spirits to answer. In a moment the answer came. From the other side of the tent, half way to the roof, as he stared intently at that spot, there came a thin childlike voice. The chiefs were deeply impressed as the dialogue between Three Eyes and the spirit continued. Luck had been brought up to believe in this sort of thing; and he did still believe a spirit talked with Three Eyes. He had never heard of a ventriloquist. Three Eyes was a clever ventriloquist. But Luck, even though he believed some spirit was present, did not think the shaman's supernatural friends were good advisors. What they suggested was often foolish and wrong, like this massacre. Nevertheless his hair always seemed to run about on his scalp in icy slippers when Three Eyes "made medicine."

"I have heard the voice of the spirit and I will decide," Long Shadow said. He rose and coiled the long belt round his neck. Luck went out with him and walked beside him to his tent, while the shaman and the Assiniboine chief followed. Then he waved them all a buoyant fare-

well and scampered back to the fort. "I will decide." Long Shadow always said that, but it was always Three Eyes who decided for him! Luck thought he knew the details now. Long Shadow would rise, make a short speech, and then offer Macdonald the peace belt. If he presented it upside down, the armed dancers would throw off their blankets and bring their sawed-off guns into action.

Just what he, William Luck, was going to do about it, he did not see yet. He was positive of only one thing—*he was not going to have his Christmas party spoiled by a massacre!*

"Perhaps Three Eyes is jealous of me, too," Luck thought, "and *wants* to spoil my party!"

What a sight the huge banquet hall presented that night under the flare of the hundred painted candles! The mighty tree was covered with gifts and grew out of a mound of them. Its branches drooped with moccasins—plain, beaded and feathered; with beaded rings, bracelets and headbands and belts; with necklaces of bears' and deers' teeth; with little pouch pockets on sinew strings made of paws and of crane's feet and ornamented with colored wools and beads. There was a beautiful rifle for Luck from

Macdonald; a complete Highland costume, with cap, socks and plaidie from Frobisher; a wonderful shining Highland dirk, with silver handle mounted in carnelians and green Scotch pebbles, from Mackenzie. There was a splendid suit, complete with leggings, moccasins, and headband of exquisite white doeskin embroidered in blue and yellow beads, for the Beloved Child from Long Shadow; an amazing bright-feathered headdress mounted on a beaded band from Kitowa; a powder horn, marvelously carved with hunting scenes, from Kakama; a beaver coat, made for him by Long Shadow's wife, with an ermine cap; blankets, furs, buffalo robes, caribou antlers, and a welter of Indian toys. And these were only half. There were presents for everyone else, too. Bunny MacFarlane, disguised as Father Christmas, in a red blanket with cap and beard made of rabbit fur, would distribute them after the dinner.

Mackenzie, dressed as a Highland chief and wearing his medals, and looking very distinguished with his crest of silver hair, sat at Macdonald's right hand. On Macdonald's left sat the Beloved Child, the Luck-o'-the-North, and next to him, Long Shadow. Chiefs, warriors, and white men were paired with due regard for

rank about the long table. Three Eyes was at the extreme end opposite Macdonald. A Scotch piper played on the bagpipes during the meal.

Luck did full justice to the food, but he was thinking: *"Where is the peace belt?"* Occasionally he nudged Long Shadow, in the hope of discovering it. He located it presently under the edge of the chief's blanket, where it hung between his knees. One end of the belt was knotted in the fringe of the blanket. Luck decided that he must duck down with his knife, cut the belt free of the blanket, and take possession of it immediately before Long Shadow reached for it. If he failed, and Long Shadow brought it up from under the table *upside down*, then the party would be off and the massacre on. Well, *he must be sure to get it first!*

The pageant began with the Highland Fling. The Sword Dance, vigorously and gracefully done by Charlie Dundas, followed; then solos, choruses and marches. By this time the Indian dancers had entered. Luck noted that each Indian took a position where he could quickly cover one white man with his gun.

Long Shadow rose. He was not a fine orator. He made the usual remarks about the enduring friendship between the two peoples. In proof

thereof, he said, he had brought the best of all gifts, the gift of peace. He stooped for the belt; but Luck had been too quick for him. The boy justified Macdonald's praise of him earlier in the day as "a born athlete." He leaped upon the table with the belt in his hands.

"Behold! Long Shadow's son brings the peace gift of the Piegans!" he cried, and held the belt in his extended hands, right side up. "The Beloved Child is the messenger of peace from the red men to the white men. My white father and my red father, put your hands together on the peace belt." Macdonald rose quickly and reached his hand to Long Shadow across the belt. After only a brief hesitation Long Shadow clasped it and laid it, within his, upon the belt. The sullen, furtive look cleared from his face, and he said heartily,

"This is good medicine," and, turning toward Three Eyes, he continued, "better medicine than yours, my brother."

Kitowa of the Crees, who had often traded with Mackenzie in years past at Fort Chipewyan, drew the explorer's hand within his across the belt. Kakama of the Assiniboines performed the same ceremony with Frobisher. Then all the warriors and the other white men followed suit.

The dancers, taking the hint, hastily slipped outside and hid their sawed-off guns in the woodshed. When they came back they tossed their blankets on the floor and, naked save for their feathers, moccasins and girdles, advanced and laid their hands also on the belt. They passed it from group to group, singing. Only Three Eyes sat, moody and still, in his place. Luck presently held up his hand for silence.

"My brothers, when there are such great chiefs as these, red and white, gathered together, who shall dare say which is greatest? It is impossible. But we may tell one another who is the greatest medicine man in the world. That is well known. Three Eyes is greatest!" The Piegans grunted approvingly and all the white men, out of their enthusiasm for their Luck-o'-the-North, shouted "hear, hear," so heartily that Three Eyes, supposing the applause was for him, looked up, somewhat cheered. "Now, when I came home from Kitowa's tent today I had a strange dream. It was strong magic that made me dream. For Three Eyes' magic is very strong. Is not thy magic strong, Three Eyes?"

"It is very strong," Three Eyes agreed. He was beginning to be pleased by these compliments.

"I dreamed that a bad medicine man far to the south—perhaps he was a Sioux——"

"If he was a bad man, he was certainly a Sioux," Long Shadow interrupted very positively.

"A bad Sioux," Luck corrected himself, "had sent the spirit of the smallpox into the north. A good white man at Little Fort William, where all white men are good and love the Piegans and the Assiniboines and the Crees, had caught this evil spirit and put it in a bottle. But because he was not a great medicine man he could not kill the spirit. I dreamed that a woodpecker flew to my ear and said, 'Let the bottle be put among the gifts by the big tree, and let Three Eyes, greatest of all medicine men, make his strong magic before it. And when his strong magic is done there will be no smallpox in the bottle, only a dead butterfly.' So I put the bottle among the gifts." He jumped down and showed where the bottle was hidden, but did not uncover it. The Indians regarded that spot nervously. The dancers standing near-by hastily moved away. The white men looked puzzled but said nothing, not knowing what on earth Luck meant.

"Now, O Three Eyes, come," Luck cried, "and make your strongest medicine."

Nothing, not even the massacre he had planned, could have suited the conceited old man so well. In fact, this was much better than the massacre—which, after all, would have made his admiring audience a good deal smaller! He shuffled forward, secretly popping into his mouth the dried soap berries with which he made foam come upon his lips. He went through a terrible contortion that cast him to the ground with his blanket over his head. When he came up again his face had become a wolf's, by the simple trick of fastening on a dried wolf head as a mask while he was writhing under the blanket. He howled like a wolf, grunted, chanted and answered himself in a squeaking voice from different parts of the room. Foam and red paint, meant for blood, dripped from his lips. He shook his rattles, he danced like a madman. When he stopped, exhausted, Luck dragged out the bottle.

"Look, O Three Eyes," he cried excitedly, "and say, did the woodpecker in my dreams speak truth? Is this the smallpox spirit, or a butterfly?"

"*It is a butterfly!*" Three Eyes shouted triumphantly. "See, all men, what I have done by my magic!" All the Indians crowded round,

looking with awe at the butterfly which had once been the spirit of the smallpox.

"Then, will you not give it to this young man, who so bravely caught the spirit of the smallpox? Let it stay always at Little Fort William for a sign of friendship. And all men who come here to trade will see the strong magic of the great Three Eyes." This was a kind thought on Luck's part, because he knew how Charlie Dundas treasured his butterflies. With a grand gesture, Three Eyes presented Charlie with the bottle. Then he strode back to his seat.

The guests had moved about in the excitement, so when Luck sat down again, Mackenzie was on one side of him and Macdonald on the other.

"You're a brave wee laddie," the great explorer said, smiling. "Will you go with me to Athabasca Lake in the spring?"

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"I'll go." He beamed.

"And maybe you'll come to visit me in Scotland some day, eh?"

"All right," said Luck, always ready to go anywhere.

"I don't understand about the smallpox spirit," Macdonald said, doubtfully.

"Oh, that was to give Three Eyes a chance,"

Luck answered. "He loves to make magic. But you must *never let on that you knew it was all play.* That would offend him, because it would make him look small before the Indians."

"Oh, yes, I see that." Macdonald nodded. "And to think ye knew all along that Long Shadow was to bring my peace belt, and never told me! Mackenzie, I feel that our relations with the Indians could not be better. Yet this very day I had doubts, grave doubts. Ye young rascal, why didn't ye let the old man into the secret?" He laid his hand affectionately on Luck's shoulder.

Now was the time for William Luck to tell what a clever and brave thing he had done and gather praise. He liked praise as much as any boy. But he liked one other thing more, and that was to see everybody happy. If the Indians should learn that their plot had been discovered they would feel ashamed and uneasy. If Macdonald knew, he would always be distrustful of them. He and Long Shadow could not be friends any more. And it had never really been Long Shadow's fault. Even peevish old Three Eyes was now as blithe and gay as a morning lark! In fact, everybody felt exactly as Luck had been told everybody ought to feel at Christmas time,

which celebrated the Great Spirit's good will to man.

"You made a feast to surprise me," he laughed, "so I, too, made a Christmas surprise for you!" Then, after rubbing an inquiring hand slowly over his stomach and deciding that it could stand a little more strain, he said:

"Some more cake!" As he crammed it into his mouth there was a crash of drums, and Curved Horn led the Indian dancers out upon the floor.

Luck's joy continued during the days following the feast; for every one seemed to be contented. The three chiefs paid formal calls daily on the Factor and his distinguished white guests. Apparently, they were now the best of friends. Luck hoped that no more dangerous ideas would take root in their minds. The Indians began to break camp the morning after New Year's Day. Older men and the chiefs lingered for another week, but the young men, the hunters, set off for the trapping grounds. The Piegans went under the leadership of Curved Horn. Otter Tail, a redoubtable fighter among the Crees, took most of his people with him.

"I am going to meet many of the eastern Crees at the winter village," he told Luck. "My family is with those people; and all of them have been

trapping so that they should already have many skins. The Piegans also have furs at their place by the little river, which they did not bring in because their shaman had this foolish idea about the massacre. Any Cree can tell you that all foolish ideas come out of Piegan heads." He grunted.

"I hope the Crees and Piegans will not start to fight, if they meet out there," Luck said. "Since you can be friends when you all meet at Little Fort William, why cannot you also be friends when you meet on the prairie?"

Otter Tail grunted again.

"This year we had good reason to be friends, because we were going to act together to kill the white men and wipe them out of the land—also taking all their goods. But out on the prairie, above all when they have many furs and so have we, it seems wise to go to war because we may get each other's furs."

"You should cease war and do everything to please my white father, the great chief Macdonald," Luck said. "Because, if he becomes displeased and will no longer receive you, your furs will do you no good. Where else can you trade furs?"

Otter Tail stared straight in front of him silently for several minutes.

"You think there is no other trader in this land," he said at last. "That is because you have never travelled where I am now going. Let the white chief be careful not to displease *us*—if he wishes our furs."

Luck's expression was anxious again as he watched Otter Tail depart. He became very thoughtful, indeed, when he saw Three Eyes, the trouble-maker, setting off in haste that evening with two of his kin to join Curved Horn's party.

"What does it mean?" he asked himself. "Are there free traders out there, trying to get the Nor'-Westers' furs—perhaps even trying to stir up the Indians against Macdonald?" It would do no good, he knew, to question any Indian about it. Even his red father, Long Shadow, would not answer him; not if some thieving free trader had made Long Shadow believe that he possessed more and better goods than Macdonald! He remembered hearing of three men, who had once been members of the fur brigade. The Factor had discharged them and sent them out of the territory a few years ago. Had they come back? He must wait and watch and listen; and not disturb Macdonald with his suspicions and fears, unless events shaped in a way which made speech wiser than silence.

His secret apprehensions were not calmed by the sight of Curved Horn and a band of hunters coming over the snowy brow of the low ridge a few weeks later. But he ran to meet them, shouting delighted greetings.

Chapter III

LUCK MAKES A JOURNEY

WINTER was moving slowly toward spring. In the North the white season is reluctant to pass. The lake before the doors of Macdonald's trading post was still frozen as far as eye could see. Dazzling sun-smitten snow covered the earth in every direction with a dancing rainbow illusion.

"Why do men call snow white? It has all the colors of the prairie flowers, and also the lights of stars."

The Factor of Fort William turned sharply and looked down at the boy who had spoken. Luck had slipped quietly to his side.

"Ye must have come out by the door for ye made no sound and not even a shadow on the snow," Macdonald said, smiling. "As to snow, it is really white, or thereabouts. But the sun touches its crystals—that's the tiny bits of ice the crust is made of—and, by some law of Nature, the sparkle turns rose and blue and yel-

low and other colors. There's nought in the world lovelier than snow on a sunny day."

Luck nodded. He looked up at the Factor with bright, expectant brown eyes.

"What did Curved Horn say about my Indian father, Long Shadow? When will the Piegans come with their furs?"

Macdonald frowned.

"There's something in the wind, lad; and I'm troubled because I don't know what it is. Curved Horn, with Crow Foot and a half dozen braves, came in today to tell me that the Piegans have had a number of misfortunes this winter, so far, and been robbed of their traps and furs."

"It happens sometimes, White Father. Crees rob the Piegans."

"Ay. It happens. But I'm not convinced it has happened this year. Curved Horn wants more traps and some guns and powder and so forth. As ye know I have to trust the Piegans in order to trade with them. Last year, I let them have a wealth of goods, on account of the furs they would fetch in this spring. The company can't afford the loss of the goods. And, back there in Montreal, they'll blame me for it; which will be bad for me, maybe disastrous altogether."

Luck was silent for some time, thinking.

"You know," he said, at last, "that Long Shadow brought me to you, because he feared I might be captured in the war with the Sioux. I came from far south. One tribe took me in war from another. The Kootenays took me from the Shoshones. Then the Piegans took me from the Kootenays and they brought me here and told you that I was a white boy, not Indian. And you know that all Indians everywhere call me the Beloved Child and believe that they have good fortune when I am with them."

"Ay," said Macdonald. "What's on your mind about it now?"

"Send me with Curved Horn to the Piegan camp. They will be very happy to see me again. And I will find out if there is anything wrong. Then I can help."

"I'm afraid, Luck. There may be danger to you."

"Oh, no. All Indians will protect me first, even before their own children, because I am the Beloved Child. They believe that they would always suffer if anything happened to me. What do you think is behind all this?"

"Well, I've had warning about a band of free traders coming into the North. They're not here to stay as we, the Nor'-Westers, are. They'll get

this season's furs, if they can, and likely pay with rum, which makes devils of red men. Then they'll go. They know a year or two at most is as long as they can last here, without forts and a company behind them. To get this year's furs they'll make the Indians drunk and poison their minds against us, their old friends. And maybe there'll even be blood spilt here in the North, because of the mischief they've made."

"Then I'd better go back with Curved Horn," Luck said, decisively. "For if bad men have come to get furs and make trouble, Long Shadow, whom I love, will suffer. Except when he is deceived by others he knows that you are his best friend."

"If there's rum about, even you will be in danger," Macdonald's eyes fixed on the boy's eager face with a worried look.

"I am never in danger. I am the Beloved Child," Luck answered confidently.

Now it might have been at this very same hour that three white men, in camp with their Indian packers to the northwest of Little Fort William, discussed the details of their plot against Macdonald. The leader of the band was called Le-Bleu by the French-Canadian trappers, and

Blueface by the Indians, because of a dark blue mark on his cheek from a powder burn. He had been in the employ of the Nor'-Westers and had even, at one time, commanded at the small post of the Isle of Wings—which was a little island in a lake where the ducks and geese rested on their migrations to the far north. As a trusted agent he had taken advantage of the opportunity to cheat his employers; but Macdonald had found him out, discharged him and sent him out of the country with one of the fur brigades bound for Montreal. For that, Blueface hated Macdonald. With two other ruffians, Peter and Jim Saby, he had returned and was now trying to get the furs which the Indians owed to the Nor'-Westers. He had already waylaid one band of Crees on their march to Little Fort William and induced them to give him their bales of pelts. Now he was holding diplomatic conversations with Long Shadow's band of Piegans. These Piegans were one branch of that great warrior nation, the Blackfeet, who were really, in their secret hearts, not very friendly to white men. They were not more vengeful than most other red men; but they had been stirred to a lively resentment by the foolish act of Captain Meriwether Lewis and his companions in shooting

some of their southern kin on his way home from the Pacific. Unable to avenge this outrage on the men who had committed it, they were ready to make other white men pay the price. Blueface knew their minds. He meant to have not only their furs but revenge on Macdonald, and without endangering his own skin.

"Wait and see," he said to the Sabys as the three of them sat in their tent while their Indian cook prepared the midday meal at the camp fire before the door. "You're in too much of a hurry."

"I don't like Blackfeet," Jim Saby said. "They're treacherous. I'd rather make the trade quick and get away as fast as we can."

"Me, too." His brother nodded. "I've got no score to settle with that old fellow at Little Fort William. Blueface, you hate Macdonald so much, you don't care if we're killed."

Blueface scowled.

"I'm boss here. Don't forget that," he said angrily. "Long Shadow is only half won over. He keeps saying Macdonald is his friend and he wants to hold back his best furs so that he can take them to Little Fort William and stand in with Macdonald. That boy they call the Beloved Child is with Macdonald. That's one

reason why Long Shadow is holding off. If the boy was here, he'd do us some good. He'd be luck for us."

"Seems to me you might have put it in Curved Horn's head to fetch the boy." Jim Saby's look and tone were sullen.

"Didn't dare. Long Shadow is the most suspicious Injun you could meet. He knows all about my trouble with Macdonald. He might suspect us of meaning harm to the boy. He might think anything! You can be sure I'd get the boy here if there was any way to do it safely!"

"Well, forget the boy," Peter said impatiently. "And tell us the rest of it."

"I can't say much to Long Shadow without fear of stirring up his suspicions. I have to work through his brother, old Three Eyes, the medicine man. That's what takes time. He's a vain and silly old fool, but crafty. I've told him Macdonald made fun of him making medicine. So he's mad at Macdonald. He'll go on getting madder till he's ready to let his tribe loose on Little Fort William and wipe out every man in it. I daren't try to put that notion in Long Shadow's head, myself. Before the week's out, Three Eyes will do it for me." He sneered.

"He'll make medicine; and the spirits'll tell him to set the Piegans on the war path."

"Maybe not, on account of the boy," Peter said. "Bad luck for us they haven't got him with them."

"Well, Luck's his name, with white men," Blueface snarled. "Bad luck, or not, I've heard enough growling from you and Jim."

"You've no call to talk that way to us, Blueface," Peter answered, defying his leader's scowls. "We made a team with you to get furs. You didn't tell us you were planning on a massacre at Little Fort William. I'm scared and I don't mind saying so! When Piegans start on a massacre they're likely to begin on the whites nearest to hand. And that's us! Our Injuns are scared, too. Let any Piegan lift a tomahawk and our whole crew'll run off and leave us stuck with a big load of furs we can't carry. Don't like the looks of things. And I'm free to say so."

Ignoring a furious outburst from Blueface, Peter sauntered out to have a look at the cook pot. The broth in the iron kettle, which hung over the flames, was beginning to simmer. He thrust in his hunting knife and brought out a chunk of deer meat on the point of it. Between

bites he stared across the half mile of glistening rainbow-tinted snow at the village of painted buffalo hide tents, where Long Shadow and his Piegans were camped. His shoulders twitched as if a sudden chill had run through his spine.

"Don't like it," he muttered. "Too many of them. No chance at all, if they turn on us."

Chapter IV

LUCK TURNS THE TRICK

THE first mellow hint of spring was in the air. Luck noticed that the snow was no longer crisp; it was inclined to cling to his snowshoes tonight instead of shaking off them like powder. He spoke of it to Curved Horn, who sniffed the faint breeze floating through the dusk between a clear starlit sky and the white ground, and prophesied the chinook before many days. Straight ahead of them lay Long Shadow's encampment, with fires flaming. Luck saw that another large fire burned on the other side of the creek, to the left of the trail. In answer to his question, Curved Horn said that "good friends" were camped there.

"White men?" he asked innocently. "Good friends of my white father?" Curved Horn merely grunted. Luck guessed that Macdonald's fears were only too well founded.

"From what tribe have these good men's Indians come?" he asked.

Curved Horn made a guttural sound, somewhat between an expletive and a growl, which was a common way of expressing contempt. There were several Shoshones, he said. As to the others, about a score in all, evidently the proud Piegan warrior considered them sheer mongrels, a degree lower even than Shoshones.

"Once I lived with Shoshones before I became the son of Long Shadow; do you remember?" Luck said, his tone conveying nothing but a boy's enthusiasm in recalling a great event. "No doubt they would like to take the Beloved Child back with them. Perhaps they have come here to steal me. But I will never leave the Piegans."

His active and subtle young mind was already playing with the idea of Shoshones in the neighborhood. He could not form a plan yet, because he must wait until he discovered what the situation really was between these white men and the Piegans.

"If they are not only bad men but smart," he thought, "they will have won Three Eyes to their side. And that will make it harder for me to manage Long Shadow."

Nearing the camp he saw that apparently all the men were gathered in a wide circle about a huge central fire, and one figure, that hopped and pranced in front of it—a fantastic jumping silhouette against a background of bright and blowing flame. Luck heard the whirring, clicking, snake-like noise of rattles. His heart sank. Was he too late? Three Eyes was making medicine. From far out on the plains, so it seemed, came the faint howl of a wolf; then louder, as if the beast ran toward the camp. The wolf was Three Eyes' war-spirit; and, clever ventriloquist that he was, he made really wonderful demonstrations of his talent when he chose to stock the dark prairie with his ghost-wolves which had invisible bodies and left no prints—except one large track wherever he had stood—and yet could be heard howling on all sides. Howling of the war-spirit! To learn at once if the worst he feared were true, Luck slipped away from his companions and ran to Long Shadow's tent. Long Shadow, he knew, was in the men's medicine circle, but he wanted to see if his wife was in the tent. There was no sign of her, nor of her few household goods. Crow Foot's tent, also, was empty. The dogs, which helped to pack, or haul, the iron pots

and other necessary implements of the kitchen, were gone. Luck knew what it meant! The Piegans, resolved on war, had sent the women home with the old men and the children. Only the warriors remained. He stole down to the frozen creek and looked across at the strangers' camp. Figures were grouped about the fire there, too. Luck thought it likely that these figures were the Indians of whom Curved Horn had spoken so contemptuously. The white men, whoever they were, would almost surely be at the Piegan camp to watch the results of the magic. They must be men accustomed to Indians, he reasoned, and therefore they would realize their own peril. The Piegans might turn on *them*, after Three Eyes had goaded the warriors into a frenzy by his antics, and take back the furs and even scalp the pleasant guests. Yes; certainly, the white men were in the medicine circle, ready to offer more gifts to Three Eyes and Long Shadow and to fend off, by skillful words, any menace to themselves. He felt sure that the furs had already been carried across the creek to the strangers' camp, because he had seen no bales of pelts in the Piegan tents. Since the trade had been concluded, then, why was Three Eyes making medicine? Above

all why was he summoning the wolf-spirit of *war?* Why had the women and children been sent home? Whom would the Piegans attack? The Crees? Or—his heart thumped at the thought—one of the trading posts of the Nor'-Westers? He must know at once. It would do no good, he mused, to go back to the camp. He could not ask questions, nor try to argue with his Indian father, while the shaman held every one spellbound as he capered and howled in the eerie firelit dusk. Besides Three Eyes would be furious at the interruption. He would never forgive it!

"Perhaps I can find out from the bad men's Indians what the wolf-howls mean," he said. "There are Shoshones among them."

He went down to the creek and ran along the icy surface till he was directly in the glare of the fire on the other bank. The squatting figures sprang up. One man seized a burning stick and brandished it. The others made menacing gestures.

"They are very much afraid of Piegans if only one boy can frighten them!" Luck thought, smiling. He made the peace sign and called out:

"Shoshones! *ca-me-ah-wa-it*"—meaning, in the

Shoshone tongue, "come and smoke," an invitation to strangers to confer as friends. He repeated it. Presently an Indian answered in the same language, and asked who he was.

"How is it that you ask? Do not the hearts of Shoshones tell them my name? I have traveled the long trail from the white men's house by the great lake, because I wished to see my Shoshone brothers again. I am the Beloved Child."

The Indians talked excitedly together for a few moments. Then they called to him to come up. Luck hastened up the bank and shook hands, with the Shoshones first, and then with their companions. He squatted by the fire, not waiting for an invitation, and said laughingly:

"What have you in the pot?" He rubbed his stomach. He was presently provided with a cup of broth and a chunk of buffalo tongue. He ate heartily, pausing every now and again to crack a joke, or to pass compliments on the hunting skill, or the superior country, of the Shoshones. By the time that cup and platter were empty, he and his new acquaintances were the best of friends. When he asked who the white men of their band were, they told him readily enough, not their names alone, but what

they planned to do. Luck had had an Indian boy's training in self-possession. Though his breath stopped for an instant, when he heard of the projected massacre at Little Fort William, his face revealed nothing. His mind worked swiftly. He saw only one chance of ruining Blueface's plot; and he took it. It might fail, but he would do his best.

"If you were Crees, I would say nothing; because I am now a Piegan, and Piegans and Crees are not friends," he said. "But you are Shoshones and I still consider you, also, to be my own people. Can you really believe the Piegans will do as this Blueface hopes? Does Blueface really know why Curved Horn was sent to talk with the great white chief, Macdonald, who is like Long Shadow's own brother? Macdonald does not wish other white men to trade in the North." He said the last two sentences very slowly and emphatically. The Indians exchanged glances. The Shoshone, who seemed to be the leader of Blueface's crew, and who squatted close at his side, leaned down and stared into his face. Luck continued in the same slow, impressive tone. "And Long Shadow, who is like Macdonald's brother,—and also all the hunters of the Piegan nation—do

not wish Shoshones, or any strangers, to hunt in their country."

"We are going away tomorrow," the Indian beside him answered. The tone of his voice indicated that he was disturbed. Luck allowed this remark to pass in silence for a moment, knowing that the Indians were waiting uneasily for his next words.

"The Piegans will say that strangers, who are permitted to go away tomorrow, may return," he said at last.

"Say more. We listen," another man demanded. "You know the minds of the Piegans."

"My brothers," he replied, slowly, "you have seen a weasel on the ground, and a hawk in the air above it?"

"Yes! yes! speak plainly!" Several of them answered at once. Two men rose, picking up their rifles.

"My brothers, *was it in the mind of the hawk to wait till tomorrow?*"

As Luck finished speaking, the other Indians sprang to their feet. For a moment, they stood still, staring at him, not exactly doubting him but waiting for something more decisive than his veiled words about the hawk. The decisive thing came to them on the night breeze—the

"hi-yeh-i, hi-yeh-i-yah" of the Blackfeet war song, bursting forth shrilly from many throats and drowning the howls of the old shaman's spirit-wolf.

"Do you hear?" Luck cried excitedly. "Take your lives with you, and run! You have not time to gather up anything else. How fortunate that you have your guns in your hands!"

Without even a word of farewell, the Shoshones fled out of the camp; the other Indians, who had smelled peril though they could not understand Luck's speech, followed. Luck's eyes were snapping in the dusk as he stood and watched Blueface's Indians melt, like shadows, into the blackness of the prairie night.

"Three white men cannot possibly carry off the furs," he remarked aloud, contentedly. He noted that the fire was burning low. It would probably be out before Blueface and the Sabys left the Piegans. They would have to dance and whoop among the warriors for an hour or so, at least, or risk offending them. He poked about the camp, which consisted of five large tents. He found the furs—both the Piegans' and the Crees' winter harvest—piled in high stacks behind one of the tents. Further on he discovered two kegs. Evidently the cautious

Blueface intended to give the rum to the Piegans only at the last moment before he and his men set out. Luck used his tomahawk thoroughly on the lower staves of both kegs. He thought that the odor of the pouring rum would probably pass from the snow bank, in which the kegs were embedded, before Blueface returned. However, that was a relatively unimportant point. He was delighted to find, in one of the Indian tents, a willow whistle of clever workmanship and possessing an excellently shrill and piercing tone. He sat on a log by the dying embers and whistled to his heart's content. It was chill after the fire had gone out. He drank another cup of the soup, still hot in the iron pot, and then went off to the stacks of furs, where he dug himself in for the night. He drowsed lightly, alert even in sleep.

"Bet our Injuns are scared to death, hearing that Piegan war whoop. Not a whisper in their tents."

Luck raised himself on his elbow and listened. He heard men moving in the tent against which the furs were stacked.

"They're asleep."

"If they were asleep you'd hear some of them snoring. Heard it every other night."

"That's so. Blueface, holler out to that big Shoshone to have everything ready for us to start soon as it's light."

Luck listened breathlessly while Blueface shouted several times, then cursed because he received no answer, and presently went stumbling through the darkness to the next tent and yelled into it.

"Now what will they do?" he thought, gleefully.

"Peter! Jim!" A hoarse roar broke from Blueface.

"What's the matter?" Sudden terror rang in the two voices on the other side of the thin hide wall. Then there followed the noise of stumbling and rushing; and, last, cries and oaths, a wild jumble of sounds. Luck dropped down flat among the cozy beaver skins, as the three men dashed round the tent, panting with fright.

"No! Furs are here! Didn't steal a thing! Why did they run off without taking anything?" Blueface spoke.

"Scared bad to do that!"

"*What scared them?*" Jim Saby wanted to know, in a voice that sounded ghostly with fear.

Luck scarcely dared to breathe. His fur bed

was no more than a foot above the tallest man's head.

"Blueface, I know what scared them. And I'm scared, too; and I'm going—on the run! Never did trust Blackfeet." The speaker's tones rose, hysterically. "They found out the Piegans plan *to kill us and get back the furs!* That's why! Come on, Jim. Get your blanket and your gun. Come on!"

The Sabys ran madly past the fur stacks and round the tent. In a moment, Blueface had followed them, also on the run. Luck heard the three men fumbling with objects beyond the buffalo hide wall; and he heard, too, the fury of the Saby brothers, hurled at Blueface for getting them into such danger. He heard them go out. They ran by his furry bedside and struck the southward trail. He raised his head cautiously; in time to catch just a glimpse of them, showing faintly against the white background. He smiled and flattened down again, for sleep.

By and by the Piegans would miss him; and their alarm about losing the Beloved Child would make them forget all about taking the warpath. They would suspect Blueface of having stolen him. They would rush over here and find him, at last, and their furs, and the furs

which Blueface had taken from the Crees. And they would see that the only thing to do was to march to Little Fort William and trade with their good friend, Macdonald. He had saved even the bad men's lives. No blood would be spilled. Macdonald would be glad of that.

"I am the Beloved Child. I bring good luck to all," he murmured. He drowsed off, happily.

There was excitement enough the next morning! Luck wanted to laugh as he watched the Piegans going through the empty tents and grunting questions at one another. He offered several solutions, all of them very wide of the mark. He had been thinking the matter over and had come to his usual conclusion; namely, to tell no one what he knew. Now that the Piegans had not only their own but the Crees' furs, they must take them to Macdonald because the free traders had run off. All these furs were only good for trade; and Little Fort William was the only place to trade them. That was evident to the Piegans; for Three Eyes presently declared that, knowing all along what bad men Blueface and his band were, he had purposely scared them away by his magic. His magic had also given his tribe all the pelts

which the bad men had received from Otter Tail and the other Crees.

"Piegans, my wisdom and my medicine have made you rich!" he repeated from time to time. Luck chuckled inwardly.

Quite naturally, then, after the morning meal they all turned toward Little Fort William.

"Well, I was troubled about nothing," Macdonald said to Luck a few days later, as they stood at the gate and waved good will after Long Shadow's band, now going home well pleased with the trade.

Luck beamed contentedly. He believed that Blueface had fled the country never to return. Therefore, there was no need to tell Macdonald what had been plotted out there on the snowy prairie. He might have acted differently had he known that Blueface and the Sabys had veered north the day following their flight. Blueface knew some of the northern Indians well and he had by no means given up his plan —which was to raise a red army against the Nor'-Westers.

Chapter V

ISLE OF WINGS

WHEN Macdonald, a few days later, decided to send his trusted clerk, Bunny MacFarlane, to take charge of the spring trade at the Isle of Wings, Luck begged to be allowed to go.

"There's restlessness in your blood, lad," Macdonald remarked, with a smile. "And 'tis natural enough. All your young days ye've been on the go, from one Indian tribe to another until the Piegans brought you here."

"Yes," Luck admitted cheerfully. "After a while, wherever I am, I begin to look out at the great country which stretches four ways. I can see the prairie on three sides as far as the place where it meets the sky. And I can see the great water also to where the sky comes down to it. And I wish to go—and go—until I cross the edge of the sky and see what is beyond."

"But ye came from beyond the southern sky

line." Macdonald laughed. "Did ye know when ye crossed the edge of the sky?" He took a great deal of pleasure in the boy's mind, which still showed the influence of the red men's beliefs and their methods of thinking.

"I was too small and I was thinking of other things," Luck said gravely. "So I didn't see. Perhaps, too, we crossed it in the dark."

"Then 'tis to cross the sky that ye want to go north with Bunny, eh?"

"Yes, White Father. But also I want to see the birds. Bunny says that there will be many —*many*—ducks and geese and cranes, and other birds too, at the Isle of Wings. He says the great flocks have already begun to fly north, though we will not see them till the snow goes. They fly for days until they reach the Isle of Wings, and there they come down and rest; so thick, that the lake cannot be seen for feathers!"

His clear brown eyes, always bright with health and an eager joy in life, shone like candles now, as he pictured the sight which he so desired to see. Macdonald dropped his hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"Well, well," he said. "I see ye'll have to go. Crossing the sky and meeting a million wings is

such a fine adventure that it can't be denied to you."

Luck beamed up at him.

"All good things come to the Beloved Child," he said contentedy.

"Red man's beloved and white man's luck!" Macdonald laughed. "A fortunate lad ye are, even if ye never find out your true name, or who your parents were."

"Oh, I will find out." Luck spoke with conviction. "When my father died, he left a deerskin bag with papers in it. It is in the south among those Indians who live in the country called Oregon. One day I shall go and find it. But, first, I must see the Isle of Wings."

"Bunny! Ho, Bunny!"

Macdonald beckoned to a young man crossing the big yard which was bounded by the stockade walls of the fort. The clerk hastened over to him. He was about twenty-six, chubby though not short, blond and blue-eyed. Except when serious problems of mathematics, or doubts of what was in his Indian customers' minds, afflicted him, his expression was almost as ingenuous and boyish as Luck's.

"Bunny," the Factor said, "you're taking William Luck with your men to Isle of Wings. And

you'll be in command, because I've decided not to send an older clerk with ye."

"That's good news, sir! It'll be grand to take Luck. And, then too, being in command, I'll make every one call me 'Mr. MacFarlane,' and 'Sir,' and never a sound of 'Bunny,' to mock at me for my gun kicking me over when I was shooting at a rabbit." He laughed.

"Remember, 'tis lads we like that we nickname," Macdonald answered with a smile. "Take care of Luck. There's no danger, he says, from Indians. But I'm recalling that all the geese roosting on the lakes among the islands will bring wild animals to the spot. Mind me now, Luck," he turned to the boy, with a serious look, "don't go off alone. The wolves and lynx and bears may not know that ye are the Beloved Child."

Luck nodded. He had, as usual, every intention of obeying. No boy was ever more willing than Luck-of-the-North to do as he was told; and to do nothing on his own initiative, as he had been advised, without consulting older and wiser heads than his own. A day or so later he set off on showshoes with Bunny, contentedly anticipating only the miraculous adventure of crossing the dropped edge of the sky, and the

rapture of seeing a million wings at rest on the waters about the little fort.

Runner Lake, the white men called the broad stream on which the little Isle of Wings—feathery with slender birches and willows—poised like a bird itself. "Runner" was adapted from the Indian name "It runs." The lake was in reality a widening of Beaver River. It was dotted with islands, some of them so small that there was barely room on them for a family of beavers to sit and sun themselves. Above the lake the river was swift; and, below it, at its narrow southern entrance were falls, where the current dashed over a high barrier into a rocky canyon. When the lake was open, the water looked very placid, almost still; but a canoe, launched upon it, floated at a surprising speed. The Isle of Wings was the largest of the group of islands in the lake. It lay near the southern end, dividing the flow into two streams a little way above the falls. The fort, protected by a stout wall, faced upstream, the direction from which the Indians came in their fur-laden canoes.

Luck enjoyed every day of the journey. He was firmly convinced that, early on one very

dark night, he had crossed the sky's edge on a low hilltop. He had also made the discovery, the next morning, that there was another dip of the heavens to earth much farther away. He told Bunny that, some day, he would go far north and cross that arc, too. Bunny, who did not know how to explain the matter so that Luck would understand it, answered that there were "a lot of such places" on the plains.

"Ye'll always see one more ahead of ye, away off." Then he added that Luck should induce the company's surveyor and astronomer, David Thompson, to take him on trail one year. "He knows all about such things. The Indians call him Star Man, because he knows the stars by names. They think he talks with the Great Spirit by means of the stars."

They reached the shore of Runner Lake under the full moon and a roar of wings. Hundreds of arctic geese in migration swooped from on high, honking, their pinions sounding like a strong and crying wind, and slanted above the travelers' heads to the iced surface of the water. And, as the newly arrived flocks descended, they woke the feathered sleepers on the lake, and

these rose in snowy clouds, quacking and honking their protests at the disturbance.

"Look out," Bunny warned, "if they come full tilt into ye they'll knock ye down. Guard your face. I hope today's chinook hasn't rotted the ice we have to cross."

He himself and his two Indians had their hands full with the team. The dogs were wild to go duck-hunting! Luck saw several black shapes, running low, slink by along the bank. Wolves or foxes, he could not be sure which. He called to Bunny.

"Yes. They'll be thick here for a month, anyway," Bunny replied. "And ye needn't be surprised if ye see a lynx, or maybe a wild cat, in every tree. This is grand hunting for them."

He cautioned the boy to walk immediately behind the sled. Bunny made the trail through the closely packed birds, stepping slowly and shoving them out of his way with the butt of his rifle. The Indians followed, one holding the lead dog's collar and the other walking beside the team and ready to use his whip if the other dogs tried to break loose and make a dash for the geese and ducks. Large wings flapped indignantly about Luck's head as the geese, which Bunny had forced up, descended again. He was

obliged to free the hind ends of his long snowshoes from them by turning in the straps and driving them off with his gun. The ice held firm fortunately and in a few moments the travelers drew up at the gate of the little fort. As they looked up, what they seemed to see was the flame of two candles in a half-shadowed mound of snow on the top of the high wall. A moment later, a tawny fiery-eyed lynx leaped past their heads and went bounding among the geese and ducks, which set up a furious squawking.

"Did ye ever see such impudence?" Bunny exclaimed. "Sitting on our gate!" Then he remarked that they were all lucky to make the fort without going through the ice. "There would never be so many geese if the ice wasn't just ready to open."

There was the flash of a torch, then the creaking of poles and hinges, as the lonely half-breed, Antoine, who tended the fort in winter, swung the gate wide. Luck stepped in after the others, briskly, and tingling with excitement. The millions of wings, the leap of the lynx almost over his shoulder, the sounds and the magic and mystery of it all in the moonlight enraptured him. He felt that he too, like the noble heroes

of Indian tales, had really entered the sky country where birds and beasts were spirits filling the Happy Hunting Grounds of the Souls.

"I shall hunt here, perhaps tomorrow," he said to himself. "And it will be a magic hunt—different from all others."

Chapter VI

LUCK'S BEAR HUNT

THE next morning at sunrise, Luck took his rifle and went out to explore the island. He had been puzzled by the northward migration of the birds while the snow was still on the ground; wondering how they would find food. His question was answered when he reached the western tip of the little isle. Beyond the river current, the lake broadened into what was evidently a shallow marsh. Rushes and water grasses made a tiny forest above the ice. The geese and ducks were tearing at them and scraping the thawing ice with their strong beaks. Patches of mud and water began to appear. A warm wind blew gustily.

"White men do not believe in spirits," Luck said, as he watched the feathered folk working industriously for their breakfast. "But the Indians would say that the spirits of dead geese, which are always flying through the air, told

these live geese that they would meet the warm chinook wind here today and find food."

While he watched the geese scooping holes in the porous ice with their bills for spades, and listened to the din they made as they scraped and honked and scolded one another for getting in the way, he caught a glimpse of a dark body moving on one of the smaller islands. It was some beast of prey, a wolf probably, he thought, preparing to dash into the bird colony. Luck could not bear the thought of it. He had spent all his young life in the wilderness and he knew that the creatures of the wild lived by preying upon one another, as men lived by killing animals for their need. And he had been the adopted son of several Indian tribes; and Indians were not tender in either peace or war, although they were good to their Beloved Child, as they all called him. But it had been born in Luck to hate cruelty and whatever was ugly. His heart thumped and his throat tightened till it hurt him as he waited an instant in fear, expecting to see the wolf or fox spring upon the unsuspecting birds. The next moment, without thinking about what he was doing, he was out on the ice running toward the clump of pines where the animal had disappeared.

Under ordinary circumstances Luck would not have run out on thawing ice. He knew better. If he utterly forgot the danger to himself it was only partly because of the peril he saw threatening the birds. Last night he had called this a place of magic and prophesied a magic hunt. He had the Indian's imagination, which transformed physical objects and gave to them mythical powers; sometimes under the influence of an overpowering beauty. In the red man's spirit world, spirit hunters ran with winged feet on air, or sky, in pursuit of spirit buffalo and birds. In dreams, too, the spirit body went to the moon, or roamed the path of the stars, and returned to the sleeper's fleshly body before dawn awakened him. All these wings, filling the air with whirring and twanging sounds, had so kindled Luck's imagination that he felt this to be a spirit world and himself a spirit hunter in it, who needed nothing solid under his running feet to bear him up. The dark beast he sought was, in his thought of it, no earthly wolf such as he might have seen the day before on the prairie. It was an evil spirit; and he went in search of it as that all-powerful spirit hunter, Dawn, pursued the pack of shadow

wolves which lingered after the departing Night.

Luck sped like the wind toward the little isle where the animal had disappeared. He had almost gained the shore when the creature came slowly out of the brush, gave him a sleepy look and waddled off up the river. It was a young male black bear; and it had evidently only recently emerged from the hole where it had slept through the winter. Luck started after it. Perhaps the bear heard a slight sound in the ice which Luck's ears did not catch; for it turned suddenly and sprinted back, passing so close to him that he could have touched it with the end of his rifle. Then, to his amazement, it stopped short and squatted on the ice not more than six feet away. His rifle was raised, but he did not fire. A noise like a shot, but much louder, broke through the whirring twanging song of wings. It was followed quickly by others, as the ice cracked in front and behind him. A moment later he saw a large cake upend and pitch forward to drop, crashing, on the ice field which was moving now rapidly toward the falls. There was a loud roar, as the frozen cataract broke away and pitched to the bottom of the gorge. He realized with a cold thrill of fear that he

was out on an ice cake in the deep rushing mid-channel of the river, with tumbling blocks on all sides, and a hungry bear squatting within a few feet of him. The air above was clouded with wings; the whirling geese and ducks honked and quacked their joy at the sight of open water. As the other floating and breaking blocks crowded about Luck's precarious frozen raft, they jarred it and tipped it and threatened to thrust him off into the river. And sometimes the jamming of the cakes in front sent the bear sliding down on him. He had removed his snowshoes at once, because they would prevent even the effort to swim if he were knocked into the water. Now, suddenly, a lane opened straight ahead toward the Isle of Wings; the dividing current sweeping some of the cakes east and west of him. The water was too close for the young bear's peace of mind. With a whimper of fear, which sounded almost human, Bruin crept up to Luck and huddled beside him.

"This is a spirit bear," Luck said, aloud. "For he knows that if he attacks me on this bit of ice, he will fall off and drown. He could not swim among the tumbling and crashing blocks. And I cannot shoot him for the same reason.

Our only hope is to stay together, quite still, like friends."

He looked ahead warily, watching the action of the cakes which were jamming again where the eastern end of the Isle of Wings thrust out and narrowed the channel. He seized one of his long snowshoes and pushed against the temporary jam with all his strength. He was trying, by the only means at hand, to steer his ice raft out of the stream which flowed to the falls, and to drive it against the shore of the isle. It was almost a hopeless effort, but he persevered.

Bunny must have missed Luck, for he came out at the gate calling him anxiously. His ruddy face lost color when he saw the boy in deadly peril among the ice floes. His mind worked, however. In answer to his shouts, the Indians ran out presently with two toboggans and a rope. Under Bunny's directions they lashed the toboggans together, end to end, to form a gangplank, and waited at the farthest outthrust of the shore. If Luck could steer in close enough, they would throw one end of their toboggan bridge on to the ice cake, and hold the other end down on the shore with all their strength, while he ran along it as fast as

he could. It would be a very dangerous run, but the only chance of escape from the falls just below the island.

"The bear's alive!" Bunny shouted his amazement. He had supposed it a dead bear, which Luck had shot out on the ice just before the break.

"Don't shoot. It is a spirit bear," Luck called. He was making all possible use of his long snowshoes as pole and paddle against the current. The jam of cakes would break up at any moment and, if he were in it, his cake would be swept over the brink with the others. The bear, in his own way, knew the danger and that his chance of survival lay with the human creature beside him. Their common peril had banished hostility and established confidence.

Suddenly the ice cake swung in, almost touching the shore, and then swung out again. The Indians threw their lashed toboggans. Luck had no time to save gun or snowshoes. He dropped the snowshoe which he had been using as a pole and sped along the moving gangway, reaching the shore finally in a leap. He was hardly quicker than the bear, which catapulted after him like a huge woolly ball and went on full tilt into the stockade, almost

knocking Bunny off his feet as it bumped against his leg in passing. Bunny's exclamation was drowned in the roar of the ice, which piled in the swift narrow current and then plunged over the rim of the gorge. With wild calls of joy the low-hung sky of wings descended upon the open water. Bunny seized Luck in a bear hug. They clung to each other, prancing. The Indians beat their palms together as they had seen the Canuck boatmen do when some of their number were dancing jigs.

"You can't kill my bear," Luck said, breathlessly. "He is a spirit bear; and all my life no bear will hurt me, because he will tell all the bears."

Bunny began to remonstrate. The bear was strong, and fierce with hunger after his hibernation. The isle was small. There would be danger for everyone if the bear were not killed. The Indians, however, sided with Luck. They said that if the Beloved Child said this was a spirit bear and his friend, then it was so! When they went in they found the bear crouching in a corner of the yard. He seemed bewildered rather than frightened. The Indians, who were convinced of the protective powers of the Beloved Child, threw a blanket over the bear's

head, while Luck snapped a stout dog collar about his neck and chained him to the stockade. The dogs, chained at the other end of the yard, made an indignant clamor about the new arrival, but they could not get at him.

Daily, Luck fed and watered his spirit friend and spent hours talking to him. As soon as the stream and the marsh were cleared of ice, he told the Indians to launch one of the flat wide fur boats belonging to the fort. He led his bear by the chain to the boat.

"What sort of a pet dog do ye call that? Ye look very ridiculous!" Bunny called after him. Bunny had never liked the bear!

"He is my friend. He came to teach me that men and wild animals can be friends. This was his spirit message from the Country of the Souls. If I am ever lost in the woods or on the prairie I shall never fear again that the animals will hurt me. And I shall never starve because this spirit bear will send bears to my rifle so that I shall have food."

Bunny snorted.

"Ho! Ye think he'll send his friends to die to fill your stomach!"

"Yes," Luck answered, serene in his knowledge of mysteries hidden from white men.

"Because, to animals, the flesh is not important, whether it lives or dies—and so it is with Indians. The animals love to give their flesh to feed those hunters who show reverence to their spirits. That is why a hunter, even if he is starved, will not eat the animal he has killed until he has sung a song of gratitude to its spirit."

"Pooh! That's but Indian nonsense. The facts are that ye had no business out on thin ice, and ye've lost your gun and snowshoes. And I've no privileges from the Factor to give you new ones. Ye'll have to explain to him how ye lost a fine rifle and a beautiful pair of snowshoes. And he'll have a few hard words for ye to make ye remember to keep out of silly perils!"

Luck settled himself and his bear in the boat. He smiled happily and affectionately up at Bunny.

"The snow has gone, so I will not need snowshoes till next winter. Perhaps my spirit bear will tell me how to get a new rifle."

The boat put off and made its way slowly through the flocks, which covered the water, to the wooded shore of the lake. Luck slipped the collar from the bear's neck. There was a mo-

ment of hesitation, while the animal looked at him with its small inquisitive eyes, its snout wrinkling. Then it turned its head toward the expanse of forest and sniffed the breeze blowing through the pines. It shook itself, made a leisurely leap over the bow, and trotted off. Luck sighed. His feelings mingled joy with regret, as he watched his wild friend go contentedly home.

Chapter VII

INDIANS COME TO ISLE OF WINGS

THE river was clear of ice now; and the fur boats from the north were expected at least by the end of May, at the Isle of Wings. Bunny MacFarlane never forgot for a second who was in charge of the little trading post! He seemed to grow in dignity with each successive sunrise and his face, almost as round as King Sol's, took on a more solemn and important expression. This was his first experience as chief trader. Caesar felt less pride when he donned the imperial crown.

There was no one to impress but Luck. The Indian servants at the post gave him back stolid looks as if they saw no difference between Bunny, the clerk at Little Fort William, and "Mr." MacFarlane "chief trader" at Isle of Wings. They obeyed his orders; but they would have obeyed any man's in the same situation, chiefly because they knew their work and

were dependable men. They had a way of obeying Bunny's orders and ignoring Bunny at the same time. Behind his back one of them would strut and blow hard for the amusement of the others. When Bunny turned round again he met blank faces. Luck saw the game without taking part in it. He liked Bunny and did not mind his self-importance. He understood what a great thing it was to be a chief trader; and, if Indian hunters could dance and compose songs to celebrate their own prowess, he saw no reason why Bunny should mask his glory. Even Bunny's rather lordly manner toward himself did not bother him. The only thing that really bothered Luck was that Bunny would not give him a gun. He pleaded uselessly as the days passed.

"No, I'll not 'even lend' ye a gun," Bunny said sternly.

This morning they stood outside the gate, watching a fleet of canoes moor on the west bank of the river. More Indians were arriving every day now with their furs. Luck turned his gaze to the east bank where a score or so of Indians were raising their tepees and lighting their fires for breakfast. This small band had come on foot early that morning. Bunny said

they were probably Assiniboines. Luck's eyes were sharp and his memory retentive in the matter of even the smallest minor details. And these men did not appear to him, at least at this distance, to be the same people who had attended his Christmas party. He was watching the figure of one man particularly as it moved about—he could not see the face.

"There is a man over there who moves like a white man," he said.

"Ay, no doubt. Indians are always trying to imitate us who are their superiors," Bunny answered, with his most lordly air.

Luck stared on, without reply. He knew that Indians regarded white men in general as inferior, not superior, to themselves. But it was no time to remind Bunny of that. The chief trader could not be expected to appreciate information of so tactless a nature! Besides, his thoughts were chiefly occupied at the moment with the moral lesson which he wished to teach Luck.

"Ye'll get no gun, mind," he went on, sternly. "So don't trouble yourself more to ask for it. And I'll have ye remember 'tis entirely your own fault. Ye went out on thin ice, though ye knew better, and the ice broke; and ye threw

away your snowshoes and your rifle to leap over the floating cakes for your life——"

"Yes. It was necessary," Luck said simply. Bunny frowned.

"Ay. Because ye were out on thin ice where ye'd no right nor reason to be!" he shouted, indignant at the boy's calm, pleasant tone under a chief trader's censure.

"I can't hunt without one," Luck reminded him, with a plaintive note in his voice.

"Ah! Can't ye indeed?" Bunny gloated. "Now I wonder why ye didn't think of that before throwing away the good rifle Mr. Macdonald gave ye! Well, pester me no more about it, do ye hear? For I'm a man that's not to be wheedled once I've made up my mind."

The chief trader stalked into the fort yard. Luck sighed and tried to amuse himself by carving a red willow twig into a whistle with his knife. Now and again his eyes lifted to take in the camp scenes on the two shores. He was most interested in the little group on the east bank. After watching their motions keenly for a few minutes at a time, he concluded that the man who had first drawn his attention was of importance among them. He was served before the others began to eat. Apparently his com-

panions ceased talking and turned toward him whenever he spoke.

"He is not one of their tribe," so Luck's thoughts ran as he tried the tone of his bright whistle. "They are not familiar with him. This is not the way in which the Piegans show their respect for Long Shadow, who is one of them as well as their chief."

He jumped up to shake hands with a half dozen Woods Crees who had come over from their camp with a canoe load of pelts. They carried no guns. Because of the small force of Nor'-Westers at Isle of Wings, the Indians were not allowed to bring their rifles into the little fort. This was a slight precaution rather than a real protection; because they received guns, powder and shot in the fort in exchange for their furs. However, any Indian seen to load his rifle on the island would be hustled off it with scant ceremony.

Other canoes floated in, were unloaded and pulled up on shore. Luck thought enviously of the good rifles left in the now untenanted tepees. But the Indians' Beloved Child could not creep into a Cree's empty tent and make off with his rifle!

He launched a small canoe belonging to the company and paddled up stream. At first he kept to the west side of the river, as if he felt no interest in the group on the other side.

"If I had a rifle I could kill many bears," he thought. "For I know that my friend, the spirit bear, has sent his companions to this place to teach me to be a good hunter. Bunny cannot understand because he is only a white man. It is better to be as I am, both a white man and an Indian. I have two ways of understanding, not only one."

He noticed, without turning his head in that direction, that several of the strangers on the east bank were watching him. That might be only because the Beloved Child was the supreme interest among the tribes, he argued to himself. But the indefinable sense—that there was something strange, even hostile, about that group—persisted. Perhaps some of the Crees could tell him what he wanted to know.

He pulled in at a camp where canoes were still arriving.

"These Crees who have been on the river while those other men have been coming on foot will know whether they are Assiniboines," he reasoned. "Because, since both came from the

north, and the good trail is by the river, they must have seen them."

Luck was delighted to find that his friend of the Christmas celebration, Kitowa, was with this band of Crees. He pleased the chief very much at once by reminding him of the beautiful feathered headdress which had been Kitowa's gift to him.

Chapter VIII

THE MAN FROM THE SKY

"IT IS true," Kitowa agreed as they squatted before his tent and his wife hung the kettle over the flames to prepare tea for the guest. "Crees make the most beautiful headdresses and yet no Cree has made one finer than yours."

"Yes. I always wear it when I go to live for awhile with my red father, Long Shadow, in the tents of the Piegans," Luck replied with his ingenuous smile, knowing that his words would gratify the Cree.

"You are wise. Piegans have no more art with feathers than the birds. This is the great difference between the birds and the Piegans. The birds wear their feathers handsomely because the Great Spirit designed their blankets and headdresses. But when the Piegans took the Great Spirit's beautifully arranged feathers from the birds, they did not know what to do with them." He told his wife to bring him his

pipe. Luck said something about the delight he had experienced in watching the thousands of birds in northward migration. Kitowa nodded but was not to be turned aside from his discussion of the lack of taste evident among the Blackfeet. After the first slow puff of the pungent *kinickinick* he went on.

"So inartistic was the native war bonnet of the Piegans that even they themselves knew it. When they killed a few Sioux in battle they took the dead men's war bonnets and copied them. If the Piegan warriors can now admire themselves when they hang over a pool, or see themselves in the mirrors which they buy from the white traders, they can thank the Sioux."

"Yes," Luck agreed affably, taking his tea from Kitowa's wife and giving her a dignified compliment for it. But he felt loyally bound to say a word for Long Shadow's nation.

"It is the same with the dress of the Blackfeet women. When the women of the Sioux, and other nations also, saw how much more beautiful was the Blackfeet women's dress than their own, they immediately copied it."

Kitowa grunted.

"Who can account for the follies of women?" he asked. "Every man knows women are vain

and can only be compared to humming birds and butterflies which do nothing but display themselves. Whereas a man's thoughts are wise and strong. They are more becoming to a warrior than his bonnet."

"All say that Kitowa's thoughts are wise and strong." Luck's tone was deferential. "Yes. It is said that Kitowa's thoughts are sharp, like arrows made of light. They can pierce through the trees hanging over a river to see what tribes of men are on the prairie trail and to read their hearts—whether they travel with good hearts or evil."

Kitowa glanced at him obliquely and grunted. After a pause, he put his pipe on the ground beside him. Luck was silent waiting.

"I am not like the arrow. I am like the caribou which may be killed by the arrow, unless he smells the presence of the hunter. I smell strange scents many miles, like the caribou. Do you see the camp over there?"

"You mean the small band of Crees who came on foot?" Luck asked innocently.

Kitowa darted a sharp look at him.

"Only three are Crees," he said. "They are not of my company. Many thousands of Crees are in the land. I do not know these men—only,

they speak the Cree tongue. There are some Assiniboines; and I do not know who the other men are."

"That is strange," Luck said. "Men do not travel together so far when they are not of the same tribe. Nor do strangers hunt together."

"These men have not come to hunt but to talk with all the Crees who shall come to trade at Isle of Wings. They have already talked with me; for we camped at the same place one night." He paused again, so long that Luck feared he had changed his mind about telling him any more.

"Had they tales of great hunts or deeds of war?" he asked. "But you could tell them better ones."

Kitowa gave him an approving glance.

"I am glad to hear a boy who has been brought up by Piegans speak so well of Crees. It shows that the Piegans have some honesty and have told you the truth about us—which is more than I would have expected." He paused again.

"Let me hear the tales, Kitowa; even if they were only such wonder tales as our elders tell to children."

Kitowa turned to him gravely, putting a hand on his arm.

"Beloved Child, their wonder tale can scarcely be told to men; for men can go mad from hearing it. Listen. They say that a great medicine man has come among them. No, he is more than a shaman. He is the Divine Culturist come once more to the red men. They say that a ball of fire raced across the sky to the east. It dropped and was a great stone, like iron, in the earth. The winter came and the snows fell and covered it. But when the chinook blew they saw many wings circling over it. This was strange. So they went to look. And the huge stone was gone. In its place stood a man. All about him were broken pieces of the stone, as if he had burst it in stepping forth from it. They asked him in the sign language, *Who are you? What tribe?*"

Kitowa's right hand lifted in the querying gesture and descended to rub the back of his left hand, meaning "what skin?"

"And what answer did this stranger make?"

"He made the sign for a son and he pointed to the sky. Then they took him to their camp. He sat silent while they gave him food and talked about him. Before the night fell he was able to speak to them in their own language; not well, yet a little."

"What did he say? Did he tell them why he

had come from the Country of the Souls to live among men?"

Kitowa remained silent for some moments.

"You will hear of it one day; so that it may as well be I myself who tell you. He has been sent by the dead braves, who are now the Souls, to make all the tribes friends and to lead them as one nation to drive all white men from the land. So he says," he added after a pause.

"And what do you think of all this, Kitowa? You are a wise man and your thoughts on this matter will be wise." Luck's heart was beating so rapidly that he had difficulty in masking his excitement.

Kitowa did not reply for several minutes.

"You know what we feel about the white men," he said finally. "Their guns and blankets are good. We like their flour and tea and sugar. If no more white men come, we are secure and better off than when we had only arrows with which to kill buffalo; and no good traps. But he, who calls himself Son of the Souls, says that many more white men will come and will cause many Indians to die and others to become weak."

He paused and refilled his pipe. Luck, con-

trolling himself with an effort, waited for him to continue.

"He says that up in the sky all dead braves from all tribes are now friends and speak like brothers, though they were of different tribes and fought one another when they lived on earth. And I am puzzled why he, who is a spirit chief and knew all the dead warriors so well that they sent him to earth, must at first use the sign language; and then could speak only a few words and with a strange accent."

Chapter IX

THE WISDOM OF KITOWA

"WHAT he says may be good," Luck said, trying to speak indifferently. "But does he say where you will get guns after you have driven out the white men; or shall the Indians hunt only with arrows again?"

"He says that he will give us guns and flour; because, being divine, he can make these things. I asked those who told me to let me see a gun which he had made and, if his gun shot straight, I would buy it and consider his words. They had no such gun. My wisdom counsels me to see such a gun first before I let all his words winter in my heart, like a bear in a hole, and then come forth strong and hungry in the spring." He shrugged.

"What more does your wisdom say, Kitowa?"

The chief grunted and spat upon the ground.

"It is hard for me to believe that Cree warriors in the Country of the Souls desire us to become

no more than Piegans and Assiniboines; as if Crees were not the best men! The white men try to make all the tribes friends, each thinking his own people no better than others. Beloved Child, my wisdom is puzzled because this Son of the Souls comes to us talking like a white man."

Luck was aware of motion on the other bank but he dared not look. The Chief was watching him.

"Do you know where he is now, Kitowa? I would like to see this man who came from the sky in a falling star."

Kitowa grunted and presently remarked on the good catch of beaver during the past winter; as if he had not heard Luck's question. Luck took the hint and praised the skill and the bravery of Cree fur hunters. It was plain that he would learn nothing more from Kitowa, who was perhaps regretting that he had said anything at all about the mysterious visitant from the Country of the Souls. He rose, unhurriedly, after saying how highly Macdonald of Little Fort William regarded Kitowa, shook hands, and stepped into the canoe.

"Tell Macdonald that I am always his friend," Kitowa called after him. Luck turned and nodded gravely.

"Always" could, as he knew, indicate a very short time. Let some one with evil motives persuade Kitowa that Macdonald was not dealing fairly with him, and "always" would end on the instant!

He debated with himself as to telling Bunny all that he had heard from Kitowa, and decided against the recital. Bunny was young, none too wise in judging the Indian mind, Luck thought; and at present he was too full of his own importance to recognize the greater, and perhaps sinister, importance of this visitant from the skies. To Luck, brought up by red men and educated in Indian myths, it seemed by no means impossible for the bright dancing braves, who lived in the northern sky, to send a spirit man from the Country of the Souls.

Far off, on all sides, the sky touched the earth: so that a spirit man did not even need wings, like a bird, to descend to the prairie. Nor did he need to come inside a falling star, or a huge ball of stone; although he might choose that way of coming because it was undoubtedly impressive. This being might quite genuinely, then, have dropped from the sky. Whether he had, or not, was something to be determined later, after investigation. What chiefly engaged

Luck's thought just now was the purpose of his visit. To make all the tribes friends so that he could lead them as one nation against the fur posts and clear the white men from the land . . .? *It was a bad idea!* And a stupid one, also.

The white men were doing no harm, only good, to the Indians; and they were trading them excellent guns for their furs. There was no sensible reason for making new guns by magic —he sighed, and wished that *he* knew how it was done, so that he could possess a rifle again! Yes; this might be a true spirit man but his plans were bad. Luck's thoughts turned for a moment to Three Eyes, the Piegan shaman, and the evil advice which Three Eyes had received from his guardian spirits on Christmas day. Here was something more of the same kind. And it all went to prove that spirits were often more foolish than the men of this earth.

It was also possible that this stranger was not a spirit at all but a man who had a grudge against the Nor'-Westers: a clever half-breed or a Canadian, or even a Scot. He might be a free trader who desired to separate the tribes from the Nor'-Westers and to get their furs for himself, and his friends. He might be an old

servant whom the company had discharged for bad conduct. The man called Blueface came into his mind. Blueface had been very clever about getting the Crees' furs; and clever also in turning the Piegans against Macdonald. No doubt he had learned since how the Beloved Child tricked his Indians into running away. But had Blueface not gone south?

As he floated past the tepees on the east bank, Luck wondered if Blueface were in one of them; and whether the spirit man would turn out to be Blueface himself or one of his bad white friends.

Chapter X

TWO WAYS OF JUSTICE

HE considered what he should say to Bunny.

"If I tell him all that Kitowa said," he thought, using his paddle for steering and letting the tide carry his canoe toward the little fort at its own pace, "he may not listen to me when I say 'do not speak of it to Kitowa.' It would be a great mistake to question Kitowa; for he is already sorry that he told me so much. Only he could not bear to keep such a wonderful story to himself." He smiled, remembering the chief's impressive manner, his dramatic tone. "There is nothing my Indian people love more than telling stories!"

If Bunny asked questions—above all, with his new air of authority and self-importance—Kitowa would lie to him blandly and would probably explain Luck's indiscretion by saying that he had made up the tale merely to give pleasure to the Beloved Child, who had mistaken its

meaning! To be asked a direct query, as Luck knew, aroused an Indian's suspicions. He would hide behind a lie, or an evasion, until he had reasoned out for himself the white man's most probable motive for putting the question. It would certainly not help matters to convince Kitowa that the Sky Visitor was alarming the Nor'-Westers and to let him carry that news back north with him.

"Since I do not know exactly what I should do about this stranger from the stars," Luck said to himself, leaping ashore, "it is fortunate that I need do nothing immediately. If he is in that tent over there, he is not going to attack the fort; the men with him are too few. Also, if Kitowa speaks the truth, his plans are much bigger. Yes; to try to bring all the tribes together is a very big plan. He must do this first, before he can begin to kill the white men at all the trading posts. He cannot do it in a hurry. Therefore I have plenty of time to consider and decide what *I* should do to prevent all this foolishness."

When he landed, two small parties of Kitowa's people were putting off with their supplies. Luck sighed at the sight of the new rifles!

Bunny was on the lookout for him. He greeted

Luck with a grave and perplexed expression on his round face.

"There's something going on," he said. "And I've no notion at all what it is. Nor any instructions in regard to it."

"What do you think it is?" Luck asked. "Did the Crees bring some bad news?"

He thought it unlikely that they had informed Bunny of the Sky Visitor. If they had meant Bunny to know, Kitowa himself would have come to tell him.

"No. 'Tis a small group of Assiniboines, where ye thought ye saw a white man; or a savage acting like one. Five of them came over and wanted to buy rifles for next to nothing. I was indignant, as I'd every right to be. They talked so fast that I couldn't make out the half of it. And the other savages—there were a score or more—were terribly impressed by them. Then they went off without trading. And I had trouble making the others trade the full price in pelts for their guns and powder. The men here—our own Indians, Sunfoot and Joe-le-roi, who is a half-breed but as Indian as any—now, they must have understood, but they'll tell me nothing much. And me chief trader, mind ye!"

Bunny scowled and bit his lip with vexation.

"They think that when they tell a little, then you understand the rest," Luck said soothingly.

"Well, I don't," Bunny snorted. "Nor can any man of sense! Something about getting better guns up north, where guns are made by magic and come cheap. Did ye ever hear such absurdity?"

"I don't know those men," Luck said after a few moments' thought, "but they know me. All red men know the Beloved Child. I will go to visit them. Not now; or they will believe that we are troubled about them. Later, at sunset. And I will talk about hunting, and then presently about good guns and bad guns——"

"Ay," Bunny broke in. "That's the idea. I would have suggested it to ye in a moment myself."

"But I'll need the loan of a first class rifle," Luck wound up casually.

He glanced at Bunny swiftly out of the corner of his eye. The chief trader became indignant at once. He lost sight of the obvious fact that the possession of a good rifle would make Luck's little game easier to play. He only saw that the boy was still trying to get the gun which he, the chief trader, had said he could not have.

"Ah! Ye will, will ye? And I say, ye won't!"

he shouted. "I'm a man of authority! And ye, and all others that's here, will mind my words. Ye're always showing off what ye think ye know about red men and their foolish superstitions. Spirit bears and what not! Well then, go get ye a gun by Indian magic. Ay, a spirit gun that'll come to ye without your trading for it or me giving ye the loan of it! Nonsense and tricks! But ye don't catch me by them."

"But Bunny, I'm not trying to catch you." Luck went on to explain why he needed the rifle. At least, if Bunny would not let him have one to take into the Assiniboines' camp, surely he would give it to him later as a reward for his efforts, if he succeeded in finding out what mischief the strangers intended.

"If ye succeed," Bunny said, "ye'll do well. And your conscience will reward ye. No right-thinking man asks for more reward than that for doing his duty."

"When Curved Horn ran on foot many miles and told the Blackfeet that the Sioux were coming, Long Shadow gave him presents. It is the custom."

Bunny snorted.

"No doubt. Indian morals! How many times has Macdonald—and Davy Thompson, too—

saved the goods of the Company and the lives of other traders by skill and sacrifice in doing their duty. And them able to lay their hands on anything in the fort they desired! But not a bit of a reward did they take, nor wish for. If ye're a true son to Macdonald ye'll ask nothing for serving him now, but the joy of doing your duty." He strode indoors.

Luck amused himself as best he could with his whistle for the rest of the afternoon. He pondered Bunny's words while he blew sharp trills into the sunny spring air. It was true about Macdonald, he knew; and he realized that he admired him for it. For a man to disregard himself entirely in service to others, or to his Great Spirit, or because this was his concept of a "right man"—yes, it was noble and strong. But was it quite just for others to let the good man's good conscience be his sole reward? Luck thought not. Long Shadow was just when he rewarded Curved Horn. Not greed, but justice, was the motive in the Indians' exchange of presents.

Here was a new example of the difference between the white man's mind and the Indian's in dealing with a very important thing. Luck felt that it was necessary for him to understand the

white man's way, whether he approved of it or not. Events thus far seemed to him to prove that he had appeared in the North to be the special friend of both races, interpreting the one to the other. In a sense he, too, like certain invisible presences, was a guardian spirit. If there were bears which were, like *his* bears, both real bears in the flesh and fur and, at the same time, spirit bears, then there were doubtless men—such as he—who were both men and spirits, but who did not know this early in life. A day came, revealing some great deed to be done, and then they found out their dual powers, because it was necessary for them to use these powers for the good of many people. Today was *his* day to learn. He had begun as the red men's Beloved Child. Then the red men themselves brought him to the fort to be the white men's Luck. And twice he had saved the one people from peril and the other from folly. Ignorantly, thinking of it only as a pleasure excursion, he had come north with Bunny. Yet see what strange happenings!—passing at night through an arc of the sky—there it was now, far south of him—coming at dusk among the hosts of descending birds, as if unearthly wings wrapped him and bore him to the little isle—then the peril on the ice with the

spirit bear beside him, making all bears forever his friends and protectors. And last, today, with Kitowa's tale of the bad spirit man, had come this final knowledge; that he, too, was a spirit man and must baffle and defeat in some way the evil Sky Visitor—since mere men, like the Indians and the white traders, were not wise enough to be able to overcome him.

"All this I must do," he said to himself. "The spirit in the Beloved Child brings good to all."

That point was settled. He must and would defeat this gigantic evil plot; whether it were a plot of fleshly bad men or of supernatural beings with limited intelligence, like old Three Eyes' invisible counsellors. What means he would use were still unknown to him, but he was not worried about that. Now that he knew the Beloved Child to be a spirit man he could confidently await the right leading from the Great Spirit, who gave the wisdom necessary to preserve life, not only to men but to animals and birds.

While he waited for sunset, Luck devoted his mind to the other problem which was involved in his failure, thus far, to get a gun. That problem was the white man's curious ethics, of rewarding nobility with injustice! As he tootled innocently upon his red willow whistle, he came

to the conclusion that, though good white men, such as Macdonald, had superior minds, yet they used them in an inferior way. They wished to do good to others and cared little about themselves. Luck appreciated that. But where their intelligence failed was in not seeing that their good was turned into a kind of harm by those who took it and gave nothing for it. It was bad for those others and, in time, their hearts would grow mean and they would think themselves the important and great ones, needing to *do* nothing, since they were *served!* Whereas, by the Indian way of a gift for a gift, those who had been benefited by the noble man's action showed that they, too, wished to be noble and to stand in equality of spirit with him.

"Injustice is not intelligent, besides being a very evil thing," Luck decided, thinking a red willow whistle a poor substitute for a gun!

Chapter XI

BY THE ENEMY'S CAMP FIRE

TRADING was brisk at Isle of Wings. All day canoes came from the camps on the river's banks, laden with pelts and went back with blankets, flour, guns, powder and tobacco. Luck exchanged greetings with old friends and made new ones; but his mind was fixed on the tepees on the east bank. Was he right in suspecting the presence of a white man in that camp of trouble makers? The figure, which he had watched earlier in the day, had disappeared within one of the tents. A few of the Indians had crossed to the other camps on brief visits and returned. Their light bark canoes, which they had carried on trail, were now drawn upon the bank.

Presently Luck saw an Indian come out of the largest tent with a rifle in his hand.

"It looks like a new gun," he thought, seeing the glints on barrel and butt. He wondered if it were one of those guns which, according to the

Crees' disturbing reports, had been made by magic in the north where the strange spirit man was said to have descended, on a meteor, from the sky.

The Indian stood on the rim of the bank, held the rifle aloft, and turned it in the light. Luck saw the men in the Cree camps form into groups on their side of the river. They watched the man with the rifle and talked intently. After a few moments—and seeing that he had focussed their attention—the man hung the rifle across the lower boughs of a small birch at the edge of the river. Then he went into the tent and came out again with a powder horn and shot pouch. He slung these by their cords on the bough where he had placed the rifle.

"I wish I had them," Luck muttered enviously. "Even from here, the gun, pouch and horn look to be perfect. How foolish to be without a gun!"

For the instant his thoughts recurred to the stern young chief trader within the fort.

"If spirits are just, though some white men are not," he said to himself, "I shall receive a rifle and powder for doing a good deed."

The question of reward must wait. The matter demanding his immediate attention was the real purpose of the men who claimed to have

seen guns made by magic. And he must find out, also, if the Nor'-Westers' old enemy, Blueface, had a hand in the present troubles. Blueface had shown himself both resourceful and influential during the past winter, Luck admitted. It was a clever man, not a fool, who had been able to get the Crees' furs and to turn Long Shadow and the Blackfeet against Macdonald. By what arguments had he succeeded? Luck wondered, of a sudden, whether Blueface had dropped hints then about this great medicine man from the Country of the Souls, who made guns by magic. Perhaps the great Piegan nation already knew of the Sky Visitant's plan to unite all the tribes of the north against the white men? That thought made his heart throb faster. If Long Shadow knew, and yet had said nothing about so vast a wonder to the Beloved Child, then the plot was farther along toward fruition than Luck had imagined it could be. Danger was not forecast. It hung now, like the wings of a hawk, over the land.

As the sun's face dropped from view leaving only plumes of flame among the clouds, Luck put off in his canoe for the strangers' camp.

"Old Man," he said reverently to the departing sun—his thoughts expressing themselves in

the Blackfoot tongue, in which the sun is literally *old man*—"may I be blessed with the full blessing of the sun and the earth; and do good to all before I see your holy face again tomorrow."

He noticed that his visit aroused interest in the other encampments. Several Crees went to the edge of the bank to watch him. Kitowa stood shading his eyes with his palm.

Luck pulled his canoe up on the slanting mud shore of the stream and climbed to the camp. The man who had engaged his attention earlier in the day was nowhere in sight.

"He is in there," Luck said to himself, noting that the flap of the largest tent was closed.

Though the Indians sitting round the fire must have seen his canoe crossing from the island, they took no notice of him until he entered their circle. This was an unusual experience for the Beloved Child, who was always hailed with joy in every camp. He needed no other evidence to tell him that there was hostility toward him here. But he gave no sign that he found their manner strange, as he passed through their circle and seated himself on a log.

"I am the Beloved Child. I came to the red men from far south," he said, pleasantly. "You

are men from far north. The winters in your country are longer than here. You must be strong men to live in such a hard country."

Several of the Indians grunted and one of them replied that all northern men were stronger than the southern men and all Indians better than whites.

"What is your name?" Luck asked him.

"Sitting Fox," the man answered.

"I have many friends among your people," Luck went on affably. "The Crees are all fine men and Kitowa looks upon me as his own son."

Sitting Fox grunted, without looking at him.

"Kakama, the great Chief of the Assiniboines, is also one of my Indian fathers. I am pleased to see Crees and Assiniboines such good friends. You behave as if you were one nation."

"Yes. We are one people."

"I am glad to hear you say so. The Piegans also are one people, though they are several tribes and are spread over a wide country. So are the white men."

"All red men are one people, because their skin is the same color. White men are of another color and come from far off." He leaned forward and spat into the fire. Luck appeared not to

notice the insulting gesture. Sitting Fox gave him a slanting look and then added: "You are a white man and came from far off."

"It is better for men to stay in their own country," another Indian said. He threw a log on the fire.

"It is true that I came from far off," Luck said. "But why do you say I am white? You do not know."

Sitting Fox turned directly to him and stared in surprise.

"Are you not a white man?" he asked.

Luck looked back at him gravely for a few moments.

"What is the color of a spirit man's skin?" he said slowly.

He felt the tension caused among the group by his words. One of the Assiniboines demanded of the Cree next to him what had been said; and the Cree translated it. At last Sitting Fox said:

"What do you know about spirit men? You are not one. You did not come from the stars."

"Again I say, how do you know? You have heard that I came from the south, and that men say I am white. But you *know* nothing. Yes. There is one thing you know. Wherever I go

among red men I am the Beloved Child and bring good to all, making all men friends as if they were of one blood. Who but a spirit man can do such a thing?"

He sat quiet, apparently indifferent, while this speech was translated and discussed. His sharp ears caught the murmur of voices in the tent near him. Presently an Indian stepped out and beckoned to Sitting Fox. The two went off a little distance together. Luck guessed that their talk concerned him, but it was impossible for him to hear what they were saying. He moved to another log where he could see the two men out of the corner of his eye. Meanwhile he was acutely conscious of the unrest he had caused in the group before him. He wondered what the man hidden in the tent had said; and questioned, too, why he did not come out. He felt the presence of danger, with no inkling of the method by which it might suddenly manifest itself.

"I wish I had a gun," he thought. He turned and looked at the rifle suspended on the tree branches. Then, impulsively, he rose and went over to examine it. The powder horn was new and finely carved, the shot pouch a marvel of beautiful beading; and the rifle was as handsome as any he had ever seen. Here was the natural

reward of a good deed; how would he earn it? Luck became so engrossed in looking over these things for which his heart longed that he paid no attention to the movements of the men about the fire. He did not see a malevolent powder-marked face peer at him between the tent flaps.

Chapter XII

LUCK GETS A GUN

"THE Man from the Sky says that the Beloved Child makes danger for him," the other Indian said to Sitting Fox. "He is very angry because the Beloved Child now calls himself a spirit man. He says, 'Look at his face. Is there a blue star on it, as on mine from the burning star which brought me to earth?' It is true, his face has no mark; therefore he is not a spirit man."

"His face has no mark," Sitting Fox agreed. He frowned thoughtfully. "Why does the Man from the Sky forbid us to speak of the blue star on his face and also why does he hide himself from all the tribes? By his magic, which made the spirit rifle, he could win all these southern Crees. Yet he leaves it to me to tell them about him. He could destroy this boy, or make him harmless, but he stays in the tent and tells us to keep the Beloved Child here until dark when the spirit gun will kill him."

"Yes. But the white man at Isle of Wings will tell the Piegans *we* killed the Beloved Child. The Piegans will be angry. Kitowa also will be angry. In this advice, the Man from the Sky is not wise."

They were still debating when they heard a hissing sound from within the big tepee.

"Get the gun and bring it in here. Quick!" the invisible man commanded. The tones of both anger and fear in his voice sent Sitting Fox forward in a rush.

"Where is the weasel that bites your heels?" Luck asked, surprised by the Indian's dash to the tree. This was a native fashion of saying, "What's your hurry?" Sitting Fox made no answer but a grunt while he hastily took down the gun, horn and pouch. Luck's heart sank. His hand moved out quickly, involuntarily, and closed on the butt of the rifle.

"Don't take it away," he said.

Sitting Fox glanced nervously over his shoulder. Then he spoke in a whisper.

"Go back to the fort. Here is very dangerous magic. This gun will not kill Indians, only white men. The Man from the Sky would be angry if he heard me tell you these things."

"Ah! so the man who pretends to come from the sky is in the big tent!" Luck exclaimed.

"No! no!" Sitting Fox denied it vigorously. "But he has told us that this gun's magic will kill you after dusk. It is now dusk. We are afraid the Piegans will say we killed you. Go at once."

Luck appeared to consider for a moment, then he made a gesture of acquiescence.

"Very well. I will go."

Sitting Fox grunted his relief and made off swiftly with the gun. Luck, seeing that the others were now looking at Sitting Fox and had therefore taken their eyes off him for an instant, slipped behind the tree. He wanted to know where the magic gun was kept. As he had expected, Sitting Fox entered the large tent with it and presently emerged again without it. The Indians drew together and appeared to talk earnestly. Luck knew that, in a few moments at most, someone would come to the brink to make sure of his departure. He ran down the bank, launched his canoe and paddled swiftly into midstream. A side glance showed him two figures against the sky. They disappeared almost immediately.

"They think they have seen the last of me,"

he thought, "and I hope they are right. Certainly it will be better if I can take the gun out of the tent without being seen."

It was no longer a matter of personal desire for a weapon with which to challenge the migrating flocks and herds. Luck would not have believed that he had a right to purloin a gun for his own pleasure alone. But here, as usual, the pleasure of the Beloved Child was united with the good of his people. He must get that so-called magic gun away from the hostile strangers because of the moral effect its loss would have on the Indians who put their faith in it and in the sky man. The loss of the gun might even end the whole plot; it would certainly halt it.

"This bad spirit man, who wishes to rival me with my red brothers, will have to make many explanations," he said to himself. "Indians don't enjoy explanations why the thing did not happen, when they have been told it *would* happen! Tomorrow I will let them see me alive with this gun which he has made them believe kills white men!" He dimpled with mischief, sending his bland beaming smile into the shadow over the water of the slough, where he had hidden to wait for the darker end of dusk before the flare of stars. The idea of enmity toward himself was

so new and strange that it had not occurred to him how easily the man in the tent could have shot him under cover of the dusk and then ascribed his death to the power of the magic gun.

Some time later, he landed a few yards above the camp and crept like a snake, flat and noiseless, to the back of the big tent. The ground was clumpy here and he easily found a good peephole under the edge of the tent where the hide stretched high over a cup-like depression. Apparently all the men were there in council. The air was smoky from pipes and from a gum stick torch. His glance fell at last on the object it sought: the rifle, with powder horn and shot pouch, was suspended from the ceiling toward the back of the tent. The Man from the Sky sat against the rear wall. Luck could not see his face; and he could not understand much that he said, for he was not speaking Cree. Certainly there was no chance of his laying hands on the gun while the men were in the tent; and their pow-wow might go on for hours. They must not only leave the tent but they must not come back to it until he had gone away with the gun. Only one plan seemed at all feasible and that one, was dangerous enough.

Luck slid away from his peephole, leapt to his feet and circled the camp. The fire was dropping low, so that it cast but little light. From the far side of it he looked across into the big tepee. The men were seated in a circle; the one whose back filled the doorway prevented those opposite him from seeing anything outside. Luck worked quickly. He started a trail of sparks from the fire into the nearest tent, where—to his delight—he had discovered that most of the supplies, including powder, were stored. He lighted a bit of gum stick and placed it against the edge of the wool blanket lying just inside. The swift breeze from the river would do the rest. Already the sparks were little flames, feeding on scraps of bark and broken twigs. Luck made another detour through the dark and again snaked noiselessly over the ground to his peephole. He drew his knife and, timing its strokes by the raised voices, he slashed at the edge of the hide to make an entrance way for himself.

The smell of smoke was in the outside air now. He caught whiffs of it long before the smokers in the tent noticed it. But at last the man in the doorway realized that the gum stick torch was not responsible for the thickened air. Even as

he turned, the blaze leaped high. Shouting, he sprang up and out. The others rushed pell-mell after him. Luck slid under the slashed edge of the tent. For a few moments his plan and his life hung in the balance. One backward glance from a man outside would have caught the boy standing at full height while he reached down the gun and the powder horn and pouch hanging from its butt. But the windy leap of flames toward their powder occupied every man's attention. Reckless of burns they beat upon the flames with hands, feet, blankets.

Luck passed the magic gun out first and crawled after it. He stood up in the darkness, which was blacker by contrast with the flame, and looked for a brief instant at the men as they rushed about, grunting, shouting, fighting fire. But it was not safe to linger, enjoying the mischief he had brought to evildoers! Luck ran, through the dark, along the bank and down to his canoe. He pushed off silently into the stream where stars were beginning to reflect.

There was no doubt that the fire could be quenched before it spread to the prairie. Luck was not worried about it. The real problem, which he had now put before the Man from the Sky, was to explain the loss of the magic gun to

people who were constitutionally opposed to explanations! He beamed contentedly. Meanwhile he had a gun; at last, a gun!

"I am the Beloved Child. I bring good to all. The rifle is my reward; which is just," he murmured happily, as his little canoe nosed, whisperingly, into the shore of the Isle of Wings.

The Indians did not understand why their great shaman made them break camp and take the prairie trail at hot speed in the dark. When Blueface discovered the theft of the gun, and then the slit in the tent, he guessed that he owed these mishaps and the fire to William Luck. And he did not doubt that Luck would display the gun in the morning and thereby seriously injure his prestige. By a hurried packing and flight in the darkness he could conceal his disaster. Perhaps he could conceal it until he reached the camp of his friends, the Sabys, northwest of the ghost swamp some miles up the river, where he could get another magic gun. It was his only chance and he took it, on a swift march through the night.

Chapter XIII

NIGHT SWAN

BUNNY MACFARLANE was too busy passing goods in exchange for furs across the counter to have much to say to Luck for two or three days. He saw him only briefly when the post was closed for the night and a very tired Bunny stumbled and yawned toward his blankets. There were no regular meal hours while the heat of trading was on, no leisurely chatting over roast goose or deer steak. So Bunny did not know, during those hectic days, that Luck had a gun. Luck kept it out of Bunny's sight. He knew how sternly resolved Bunny had been not to let him have a new rifle to replace the one which he had cast away in his perilous adventure on the breaking river. And he reasoned that Bunny would be most indignant to find that he had possession of a brand new rifle in spite of his veto. Bunny might even take the beautiful new gun away from him. It would do no good

to explain that this was a spirit gun fallen to William Luck's account naturally as the just reward of a good deed. For the time being, then, Luck concealed his reward from Bunny.

And he did not set off on a hunt immediately as he had intended. A better idea came to mind. He thought over the hints he had received as to the purposes of the Man from the Sky; and he considered the influence of this gun on the men camped about. Perhaps, like Kitowa, they were not wholly convinced that it had been made by magic; yet their minds were playing with the notion. He remembered how they had stood on the river's edge staring across at the gun as it hung on the tree. Whether they believed in the magic or not, there was peril to Macdonald and to themselves in the disturbed questionings aroused by this new legend.

"I will go to all the camps," Luck said to himself. "All shall see this gun in my hands. Some are sensible men who will see that it is the copy of the Nor'-Westers' rifle and therefore was almost certainly bought at one of the northern posts. Even those who may believe that the Sky Man made it by magic will think me a great shaman too, because I now own it. This gun was brought here and hung in the tree to stir

up evil. But I am the Beloved Child and I shall make the bad spirit man's magic gun bring good to all."

He called the French half-breed, who was busy preparing a fish-line, and said to him:

"By and by tell Bunny that I will be away for two, perhaps three, sleeps. But say nothing about this gun.

"No! No!" He eyed it askance.

"I am going to stay for awhile in Kitowa's camp. Then I shall go into the woods to hunt." He smiled. "Perhaps I will bring bear and deer and geese, or a young crane."

Luck pushed off in his canoe and paddled up stream. Perhaps he would learn from some of the Crees why the friends of the Man from the Sky had slipped away in such a hurry and which direction they had taken.

He stopped to drink tea and gossip in the nearest camp. The Indians were frankly curious about the magic gun and a little in awe of it. None of them would touch it. His old acquaintance, Otter Tail, chief of this group and its spokesman, asked him presently if he were really white.

"The Piegans said so when they took you to Little Fort William. But all Crees know how

little truth there is in the mouths of Piegans."

"They were told so by tribes to the south. Why do you ask me that question now?"

"Because of the gun. The men who had it told us that if a white man touched it, it would kill him."

"Perhaps I am not a white man," Luck said. "Everything in my life has been strange. So that even I ask, Who is the Beloved Child? I hear talk of a spirit man in the North. Yet maybe I myself am the true spirit man. Who knows?"

"Who knows?" Otter Tail repeated.

A boy, apparently about Luck's age, had been sitting a little behind Otter Tail. He drew forward now and peered into Luck's face. His own face was gaunt and his eyes were startlingly bright.

"I am Night Swan," he said. "Even when I was very young I had strange dreams. So, two years ago, our shaman took me for his pupil. Ever since we heard of the Man from the Sky I have spent much time in fasting and have sought for the truth in dreams. It will be bad for my people if they are deceived."

Luck nodded gravely. He was impressed by the other boy, and felt drawn to him.

"Night Swan is my brother's son," Otter Tail explained. "I have adopted him since my brother was killed by the northern Piegans in a war which they made on us without cause on our part. I wished to make him a strong warrior so that, one day, he could avenge his father's death. But he began to dream wonderful things, and our shaman said that he must not be a warrior but serve his people in sacred ways." He sighed. "I was very sorrowful; for I wished him to be a great warrior."

"All praise brave warriors," Night Swan said. "But there is one thing better than war and better than vengeance. It is to seek the Power Beyond."

"A man must follow his guiding spirit; whether it lead to the hunt or to war; or to mysterious and holy things," Luck said. "I do not seek for truth in dreams, nor by those methods which I have seen used by Three Eyes, the powerful shaman of the Piegans. I go alone out of doors and think with my two minds —the one which is red man's, and the other which is white man's. In this way I learn what is most good for all my friends. Then good comes also to me—like this gun." He smiled,

with a pleased look at the rifle. "I needed it and it is certainly good for me that I got it."

"Tonight I will dream, having fasted now several days," Night Swan said. "And, if the dreams show me who you really are, I will come and tell you."

"Be sure to do it," Luck answered, now thoroughly interested. Would this dreaming boy, with eyes like lances tipped with stars, discover that he was really a spirit man and not a white boy? He rose. "You will find me tomorrow in Kitowa's camp. Afterwards I go to hunt in the woods."

Kitowa was waiting for him at the edge of the stream. He appeared not to notice the rifle.

"You were not there when I went to Isle of Wings," the chief said. "I asked the young white man if I had frightened you away by the wonder tales about a spirit man which I invented to entertain you." He looked searchingly at the boy.

"Oh, he would not understand. I meant to repeat these clever stories to him but I forgot them before he and I could talk together. He is very busy."

He sat down by the fire and gave a smiling greeting to Kitowa's wife who was cooking.

Luck was disturbed by the chief's words though not surprised at them. They proved that Kitowa's loyalty to his white friends would thin to less than mist if the visitor from the sky developed enough strength amnog the other Indians of the North to give good promise of driving out the palefaces. Luck's instinct had made him keep Kitowa's information about the mystic personage to himself. He realized now the wisdom of his silence. If he had told Bunny, and Kitowa had then been able to convince Bunny that the whole story was merely an amusing tale, he would have had Bunny's influence against him later on if he decided that he must discuss the affair with Macdonald. Bunny was a good man and a good friend but, as Luck phrased it, "his mind saw only those things which stood out in the sunlight." No end of mischief could come of Bunny's chatter to Macdonald and Long Shadow about the joke which Kitowa had played on the too credulous Beloved Child. Now, instead, it was Kitowa who was at a loss; not knowing—from the Beloved Child's smooth response—what he believed about the fabled Man from the Sky. Luck thought this was one point gained. It was well

to gain even one small point, with peril in the very air. His thoughts went back to Night Swan. The boy stirred his liking. He wished that Night Swan could go back to Macdonald's fort with him, to be his friend. Yet Night Swan might increase the danger that loomed over his tribe. He was a dreamer. What would he dream, perhaps tonight, and tell his people tomorrow to shape their minds? Although Luck, in his own way, believed in the mysticism of his red-skinned friends, he frequently doubted its benefits.

"Above all do I fear the dreams of a flat stomach," he said to himself, rubbing his own contentedly as the warm broth, made with rich marrow bones, went down.

All afternoon he sat and gossiped with Kitowa while the trappers went to and from the trading post. And their talk was never of the subject uppermost in their minds. But when they drew their blankets over them in the darkened tepee, Kitowa said:

"When I made up the story about a great shaman who came to earth in a falling star—do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember a little—something about

a star," Luck answered, purposely making his voice sound very drowsy.

"Well, I have invented something more which improves the tale," Kitowa continued.

"Tell it quickly before my ears are deafened by the drums of sleep beating in my nose." He yawned aloud.

"This is the new part of the tale, which I invented. The great shaman, who makes guns by magic—do you remember about the magic guns?" He waited some time for the reply.

"No-o," faintly, sleepily.

"He says that his magic guns will kill white men."

"All guns will kill white men; also red men; also deer, geese and squirrels—if these are close enough for the shot to hit in a vital place." He yawned again.

Apparently Kitowa needed to consider this reply, for he did not speak for several minutes. At last, he said, in a tone which hinted of anxiety:

"You do not fear to go hunting with your new rifle, which you have never tried before?"

Only deep steady breathing answered him. Under its murmuring rhythm Luck was think-

ing his way round the same blind circle which he had traveled before.

"Undoubtedly Sitting Fox expected this gun to kill me; but *how?* I wish I had seen the face of the man in the tent."

Chapter XIV

ALL HUNTERS GO NORTH

EARLY the next morning, as the sun painted the clouds, Luck set off upstream. Here and there against the overhanging rose and gold to the west were the changing black lines and diagonals of flocks flying northward.

"Bunny will scold less about the rifle when he sees my canoe filled with fresh meat," he thought, smiling. "They have fed on white man's dried stuff at the fort because they could not leave the trading to hunt."

The camps had frightened the game away from the lower reaches of the river. The geese were seeking sheltered water farther upstream. Bears and deer would choose to feed near the bird pools, because the sight of wings resting serenely on the marshy sloughs was reassuring. Luck turned west into a narrow channel between hedges of last year's bullrushes, and moored on a tiny islet. Trees dotted the marsh

here. As he drew his canoe ashore he heard the sound of wings descending. There were bear tracks on his island: he noted them with delight.

"My spirit bear will bring bears to my rifle," he said confidently.

He made a small fire, and boiled tea. His supper was flat bread which Kitowa's wife had baked on hot stones that morning. He watched the pools and watery lanes take on the colors of the sunset sky. A gray male timber wolf, like a shape of mist, streaked along the shadowed western shore. The tinted waters faded into silver, and darkened to indigo. He heard the low uneven rumble of hoofs striking northward. Good! Tomorrow he would kill deer.

"All hunting things, all things that live, go north. One day I, too, shall go north—and north—beyond the last arc of the sky."

Suddenly he drew back into the darkest shadow and stood, tense, against the tree. His ear had caught the sound of a paddle nearby. A moment later he knew that a canoe was gliding to his shore.

"I saw your fire, Beloved Child," said a low voice.

"Night Swan!" he exclaimed.

The Cree boy grounded his canoe and leapt ashore. They clasped hands.

"Put out the fire." Night Swan quenched the tiny blaze as he talked. "I have followed after you all day, because last night I dreamed. In my dream you had grown very great so that you could reach over the whole land. Then I saw many stone arrowheads whirling upon you, as many as if they were the snowflakes in a blizzard. But water rose, like the spring flood, and covered you, so that those who shot the arrows at you could no longer see you. A dead star lay on the mountain to the north and a man, with a mark on his face, made the arrows from the dead star. I saw your hand come high, *high,* out of the water, and it became very large so that three grizzly bears stood in it. The man tried to flee from the bears; and so he ran down the mountain and was caught in the storm of arrows which he had let loose, and died there."

"It is a strange dream," Luck said.

"The water that covered you looked like this place. So I knew I would find you here. My guardian spirit, which assumed the form of a lynx, led me. The dream is clear. This Man from the Sky, who has bewitched many, is an evil creature. You are the true spirit man. I,

Night Swan, will be your blood brother and your shaman. For, in the dream, I saw myself lying with many wounds in the place where the arrows were like snowflakes."

"Yes. We will be blood brothers," Luck said. His voice shook. He was excited by the relation of Night Swan's dream and moved by the young Cree mystic's offer of blood brotherhood. Three great bears in his hand! Because of the bears he knew that the dream was true. He had meant to kill bears tomorrow; but now he knew that he would never kill bears. His spirit bear, which had escaped the breaking ice with him, would not bring forest bears to his rifle, as he had supposed, but bears from a mystical place to aid him in saving his red people and his white people from evil.

"Now we are blood brothers," Night Swan said, and threw the end of his blanket about Luck. Under the blanket they put their arms about each other's shoulders, and stood so, a long time, in the dark, each silently vowing his life to the other.

The stars came out, scattering a thin light on the marsh and reflecting brilliantly in the lanes and wider pools of water. They knew presently that canoes had entered the marsh, because they

saw stars obliterated and then return in ripples. Peering from the blackness behind the tree, they saw a small band of shadowy forms go by. Luck grew tense with excitement. From their small numbers, these men could be no others than Sitting Fox and his companions. As they came on, passed, and continued, more visibly, across the wider water which ran northwest, a twanging sound, at intervals, broke the faint rhythm of their paddles. The bough over Luck's head shivered.

"Arrows?" he whispered.

"To frighten the ghosts which dwell in this marsh. Many foes died here long ago in a great war. Listen. Tomorrow very early we will go out of the marsh together and meet the Crees, who have finished all their trading and will start home at daybreak. I will go home with my people and I will learn all I can about the evil Man from the Sky. We will arrange signs, so that if I need to send you a message by someone, he who brings it will think it is nothing but a quiver for arrows; but, by the markings on it, you will know what is meant. I will dream tonight and tell you where you will find deer on the way back: so that you may arrive at Isle of Wings with your canoe laden with fresh meat."

"Hoofs sound on the western prairie like war drums," Luck said.

"Yes; and south of us, a few miles, there is a free channel to the land for your canoe."

Luck was thinking about the passage of his foes through the marsh; going freely in the night as on a known path. Were invisible influences directing them? Or were they guided by the man nicknamed Blueface, who had once been employed at Isle of Wings and therefore probably knew every foot of this territory? A supernatural being or a creature of flesh and blood; which? The conflict, between the mystic and the actual, in his mind, was intensified by the eerie night, with its echo of herds passing, the cries and rushes as life hunted life in the blackness, and the only thing steady and clear, without mystery, was the track of stars high over the dark earth.

"Who can say how strong the Man from the Sky may become among the tribes? He is clever," he said.

"Yet already there are two against him—you and I; you in the south, I in the north. Two shall be enough. Sleep now."

"You are not afraid to lie and sleep on the ground, with animals hunting on all sides?

Look! There, across the channel, in the pine! Eyes like fire—a lynx watching us!"

"Yes. Do not fear him. My guardian spirit takes the form of a lynx. No lynx will harm me. Sleep," Night Swan answered serenely.

Luck crept under the blanket.

Dawn was drifting through the marsh, like a white cloud, when Night Swan woke him. A pleasant smell entered his nostrils. He sat up quickly and smiled in delighted surprise at the sight of a goose roasting over a crackling fire. He asked how the goose came there, for he knew that a shot would have awakened him. Night Swan handed him an arrow and pointed to a clump of rushes behind the island. Luck's eyes opened wider and brightened.

"Yes, my blood brother. The arrow of evil ones killed food for us. In the dark it sped without aim and entered the bird, giving us meat. It is a sign." He broke the arrow and, keeping the shaft, gave the dart to Luck. While they ate, they arranged the code by which they would communicate with each other. The sun was appearing when they took to their canoes and threaded their way among the reeds and the bushy clumps over the brightening waters.

Chapter XV

STAMPEDE

THE morning breeze had stiffened, blowing from the west. Luck sniffed it contentedly. It would carry his scent away from the caribou. He floated downstream, keeping his eyes on the lookout for the channel which Night Swan had told him cut through the southern end of the swamp. He was thinking of the map, drawn with colored clays on beaver parchment, which David Thompson, the Nor'-Westers' great explorer and astronomer, had made of this section of the North. The trading post of Isle of Wings was a black dot at the bottom; from it, blue lines and red lines spread and crossed, like the great, wide, interlacing branches of a tree. The blue lines, threaded with broader blue figures—like beads irregularly strung—were the waterpath, the navigable creeks, the rivers and lakes. The red lines were the trails over the prairie. Short red lines, sometimes only dots among the blue,

marked the portages between streams. White circles indicated good camp sites; and, here and there, a yellow X beside a blue line told of a bad stretch of water, such as rapids that were dangerous and falls which must be portaged. North and northwest of Isle of Wings the fan of lesser waters opened out to the great waters—to Athabaska and Slave lakes and the mighty river on which Alexander Mackenzie had floated north, and still north, to a water vaster than all these. What a strange lake it must be, Luck mused; tasting in the mouth like salt! *He* would stand on its shore one day! So far north! It must be there, at the last low arc where sky and earth touched, that the trail of stars began, which ascended on a gentle slope and spread high over the prairie—the trail of stars where dead Piegan braves walked forever. The colored markings had made him think of stars, the first time he saw the map; stars were colored, too, in the four colors of the map. He had said to Macdonald, the Factor, then that it was as if the earth and the sky were two lakes reflecting into each other. Macdonald had laughed at the notion. Luck was thinking now that the waterway he traveled was a bit of the vast star track reflected on the earth; and he hoped that, from

beyond the bluffs to the west, he would see more of the waterways which made a starry course into the Unknown.

The Indians, who had been trading at Isle of Wings, were taking their time about breaking camp, evidently. He met only Otter Tail's three canoes northward bound before he turned into the channel which Night Swan had told him to enter; but he could hear the singing of the others, as they launched their boats.

His half of the roasted goose, which had served him and Night Swan for breakfast at dawn, seemed now to have been thin as air. Luck had eaten little on the previous day, too.

"I will turn into a dreamer or a medicine man instead of a hunter, out there on the prairie, if I go after caribou with this flat stomach," he said to himself. "*Ai-yah!* It is so flat that I feel it pressing on my spine. No wonder a man dreams mad things when he no longer knows his stomach from his backbone! He must watch his toes all day to know if he is going forward or backward!" He laughed aloud.

A point of the shore, running in a long narrow spit into the water, offered a temporary camp site that was satisfactory. Low willows, well-leafed, grew on it, which would screen a

hunter from ducks. There were mallards in the marsh. A plump young mallard, Luck thought, would do very well as a means of ending the confusion between his spine and his stomach. He turned his canoe over on the beach. His hands fairly caressed the fine rifle as he loaded it for birds. He knelt in a willow clump and waited.

His patience was not tried long. A thrill ran through his veins as he fired his first shot from the magic gun, and saw his quarry fall. Presently he had skinned the duck and was turning it over the flames. He meant to keep the skin, with its soft varied colors, to ornament a cap. Before the duck was roasted quite to his taste, he drew his canoe well into the thicket, rolled his wool blanket and laid it in the light bark hull and slit an alder branch, which hung over the place. By the mark of the slit branch he would know where to find his canoe again. These careful activities took several minutes. He went back to the fire on the other side of the clump to fetch the duck skin, so that he could spread it out to dry on the prow of the canoe.

He was just in time to save his breakfast. A black bear sat by the small blaze with one heavily muddied paw extended in the very act

of seizing the duck. It already had the duck skin, which dangled from its mouth. From the circle of tracks it was evident that the bear had moved about looking for the best point of attack; since it wanted the duck but distrusted the fire. No doubt, hidden by the bushes, it had watched Luck's proceedings from the beginning; and, belonging to the most inquisitive family of animals—save possibly the domestic cat—it had come out for a closer investigation. It stopped short now, paw in air, and stared at Luck, its snout wrinkling with inquiry. Luck's one thought was his breakfast.

"Ay-yah!" he shouted in dismay, and leaping to the fire, grabbed the duck and dashed back with it to the other side of the clump. His excited behavior alarmed Bruin. The bear took to flight along the sandspit toward the shore; but it held on to the duck's skin. Luck burst out laughing.

"Perhaps this is my old friend, my spirit bear," he thought, and wished that he had not scared the animal away. It did not take him long to pick the duck's bones clean. Satisfied that he did not need to watch his toes now to know his back from his front, he took up his rifle and started for the caribou grounds.

Another half hour found him in fresh difficulties. According to Night Swan there was an animal trail which led through a tiny ravine to the prairie; but Luck could not find it. Apparently he must work his way through the thicket and up the sheer side of the river bluff. He frowned and wished he had paid less attention to Night Swan's fascinating dream about the three giant bears, and a little more to his directions about the trail. He moved along the edge of the thicket of young pines, alders and underbrush—and stopped at the sight of duck feathers. He pulled the boughs apart and saw another feather. If a bear could get through there, he reasoned, so could he. He pushed in and, to his joy, found that he had discovered the path.

"Bears are indeed my friends," he said, his eyes shining. "For this one has marked the trail for me!"

He was in the ravine, which was only a narrow cut in the bank. The ascending path was marked by tracks on the wet soil. The banks were almost sheer, and were topped by forest growth. Bones scattered about suggested that lynx and other pouncing huntsmen frequented the overhanging density; and Luck kept a sharp

eye out as he hastened on. The first thing he saw on reaching the prairie was his guide and pot thief, the bear. It stood by a bush, a few yards off, evidently watching for him. He laughed, noting a few feathers caught in its thick fur. It still seemed to look at him in a knowing fashion, although warily. He moved very slowly toward it, speaking to it, in a low voice, the soft Piegan words which he had used to calm the fears of his pet. The bear lifted its head and moved its wrinkling nose from side to side. Its little eyes shone with interest and curiosity, perhaps with recognition. But it would not wait for a closer interview. As Luck came near, it turned swiftly and plunged into the thicket.

"I am almost sure he is my spirit bear but I wish he would let me come close enough to see if there is any mark on his fur from the collar," Luck said regretfully. The bear, which had escaped with him on the breaking ice, had been chained in the fort yard long enough, he thought, to carry some trace. Still, this bear had been kind to him, showing him the trail; and he decided that it had refused to let him touch it only because it feared to lose its liberty again, and not because it had ceased to feel

affection for him. It *must* be his own spirit bear, because he *wished* it to be!

A half mile away the ground ridged, forming the eastern side of the Bowl, as the hunters called this part of the prairie. Beyond it was a shallow depression—more like a saucer than a bowl—stretching far in the westerly direction toward another low ridge. And still beyond, so Luck had been told, the great plain rolled up against the feet of mighty mountains, the Rockies. The Bowl was Happy Hunting Grounds for caribou when the big bands roamed north, on the spreading green of the summer. Luck ran till he reached the crest of the ridge.

His heart leaped at the sight before his eager eyes. Tawny bodies and branching horns which at this season wore their dark velvet covering, caught the light in autumnal tones, as if September's leafy woods moved in the valley. They seemed to fill the depression. The small young deer tossed in the Bowl like brown leaves thickly fallen on a slow quiet stream. Here and there, flanking the herd, groups of timber wolves crept along the ridges. The keen light brought out the different hues of their coats; most of them were a dull smoke-grey, but some were tawny,

a few brindled, others sooty. The largest wolf he had ever seen, black as its shadow, slunk by a few feet below him. Luck waited to pick out a fine fat young deer, because he knew that one was all he could fetch down to his canoe. He had meant to kill at least three and bring them down separately, but he realized now that the wolves would get those he left behind before he could return for them. He saw his prey at last. A yearling, cropping slowly on the edge of the herd, was crowded by the others of its group so that it was moving up the slope—coming to his rifle. He had only to wait, watching meanwhile that no wolf slunk upon him from behind.

Then suddenly a change came to the scene. The movement on the farther side of the Bowl stopped. Old warriors, schooled in the perils of the Wild, raised their branching heads. Sounds went through the mass. Other velvet-antlered heads appeared over the western ridge. Luck saw the wolves, which had been slinking along on that side, dash about in confusion and then start to flee northward. Another herd came at a gallop across the ridge. The deer poured over apparently by hundreds. The wolves were caught, struck, rolled down the slope, trampled out of sight. The impetus of an unseen terror

passed, like a current, through the herd in the Bowl. In a trice, as he watched and tried vainly to see some sign of the thing—fire perhaps—which was driving them, the great horned mass began to surge in his direction. And Luck knew that his own body would be broken there like a moth's wing unless he ran—ran as that warrior of old ran, who outstripped the lightning. As he turned, the big black wolf streaked by him, so close that he felt its hot breath. He seemed to run a race with wolves over the half mile of prairie to the ravine and the swamp. Hoofs beat the ground behind him like the war drums of the thunder god. On his wild flight through the twisting ravine he heard the crash of heavy bodies plunging, jostling and tumbling over the brink and down through the timber. He heard trees snapped off by the impact of the fear-maddened beasts leading the stampede. What to do now? he thought desperately. What chance would he have of survival in the stream, with the huge herd swimming the river; even if he could start out in his canoe, which, all too likely, had already been smashed like an egg-shell?

Luck saw his fears realized as he emerged from the gully. The caribou were pouring

through the marsh. The willows, where he had hidden his canoe, were trampled flat. He heard more deer pounding through the ravine immediately behind him. He was caught between those ahead and the oncoming mass behind. A big bull passed the entrance close in front of him. Luck made a flying leap to its back, lay flat and grasped it round the neck as it took to the water. Swimming in the deep channel, the animal could not throw him off. But where would it take him? So many caribou in the narrow river, crazed with terror, too—not a few, surely, would be pressed under and drowned! The big bull had a good chance for his life, Luck thought; and the Beloved Child had a chance for his own as long as he held to the neck of the big bull.

The river was covered with swimming heads and horns. The pressure of newcomers, still surging in from the prairie, forced many of the first band downstream to make room for them. Luck's caribou was one of these. In the floating jam of beasts, he drew nearer to the Isle of Wings. Presently he could see it; and, then, the whole personnel of the fort up on the wall, staring at the miracle of the river suddenly filled with big game! He shouted with all the

strength of his lungs. At last they heard and saw him.

The noise of the falls told the animals of their danger. They began to crowd back, struggling always for the opposite shore. Luck knew that, if he were carried to the prairie across the river, he would be thrown and trampled. Putting his faith in the destiny of the Beloved Child, he leaped to another bull's back. He heard Bunny shout encouragement and a warning. Luck ran, leaped, ran, over the mass of deer wedged in the little bay, to the shore of Isle of Wings. Bunny caught him in a bear hug. They pranced together through the gate.

Chapter XVI

BUNNY RECEIVES AN EXPLANATION

THERE was no lack of fresh meat at Isle of Wings. Caribou stampeding and taking to the water, crowding the stream like a run of salmon, had brought beef to the larder. In a half hour the Indian, Sunfoot, and the half-breeds, Joe-le-roi and Antoine, had killed enough deer for many days of feasting.

"You know, Beloved Child," Sunfoot said to Luck, "I eat beans and flour food because there is nothing a white man does that I cannot do. But I don't like white food; it is no good. I would as soon be a beaver and chew cottonwood, as chew flour baked hard and white inside like cottonwood."

"I like flour food," Luck said, "though not so well as meat. I also like beans."

"Do you really?" Sunfoot was surprised. "I only eat beans because, as I said, I don't want white men to think, falsely, that they are supe-

rior to me. But beans don't compare with pemmican. They taste like little balls of clay. Buffalo eat grass but not the earth under it; which is sensible. Well, now I shall have plenty of meat and without the trouble of hunting."

As Luck turned to go indoors, Sunfoot said, with an air of indifference:

"That is a fine rifle which Kitowa gave you." He looked at the boy obliquely. "I wonder what you traded him for it."

"Oh, nothing," Luck answered.

Sunfoot grunted.

"Where is the Cree who gives anything for nothing—above all such a good rifle?" he asked.

"I don't know," was Luck's casual reply. He was enjoying making sport of the Indian's curiosity. Sunfoot tried another tack.

"Before you went hunting you visited the strangers who camped on the east bank."

"Oh, yes." Luck yawned.

"Their camp took fire that night." He slanted another glance at the boy.

"I must have been asleep in the fort at that time, or I would surely have gone to help them put out the fire." Luck suspected now that Sunfoot knew something about his actions that night.

"A tall fire on a bank sends a glow over the water, Beloved Child. And a man going about the outside of the fort, to make sure that no strange men have hidden themselves on the isle intending to creep in and steal—" He paused, significantly.

"Well? What did that good watchdog, Sunfoot, see?"

"The canoe of the Beloved Child coming home where the fire glow made the water bright."

"So? And what more?" Luck's eyes danced with mirth. Sunfoot noted his expression and grunted disapprovingly.

"This! When the Beloved Child went to visit the strangers *he had no gun;* because he had been forced to throw his gun away when he ran over the breaking ice, and Bunny refused to give him another. But when he came back from the camp of those strangers, while their camp was afire, *he had a gun.*"

"Perhaps they gave it to me to save it from the fire." He grinned mischievously.

"It was their magic gun, made by the Man from the Sky, who has come to make all the tribes to be as one tribe."

"So that they will kill all white men in the North?" Luck queried.

"I heard nothing about killing white men," Sunfoot mumbled.

"Now I see that you do not speak sincerely to me, although you try to make me answer questions," Luck said, sternly. "I am the Beloved Child; that is to say, a spirit man come from none knows where. I bring good to all except those who try to deceive me, as you do now."

"No, no, Beloved Child. I do not wish to deceive you." Sunfoot contradicted him anxiously. "I begin to fear when there is so much magic about; and I hear of spirit men and spirit guns. Tell me plainly, is that the spirit gun which the Assiniboines showed to the Crees, when all were camped here?"

Luck offered the rifle to him, telling him to examine it for himself. Sunfoot drew back apprehensively, saying that he preferred not to touch it. He admitted the presence of some small deceit in his mouth, though not in his heart, when he had pretended to believe that the rifle was a gift from Kitowa. With so much magic blowing about a plain man must be cautious. He had felt certain all along that the Beloved Child's new gun was the rifle said to have been made by the Man from the Sky. He could not forget what the flames on the bank

had revealed. As to killing all the white men, he knew nothing about *that;* but it was forever true that the red men once possessed the whole of their land, and now shared a part of it with an alien race. And he had been told that the white men in their own land were thick as the blades of the prairie grass. If many more white men came to the North, what would become of the Indians? It would be useless to pretend that the tribes did not speak of these things sometimes.

"Sunfoot, hear what I say." Luck spoke impressively. "If, as you believe, I took this rifle during the fire, then the Man from the Sky has only very small power, not enough to protect his magic gun. Think about that."

Sunfoot grunted twice slowly. At that moment Bunny MacFarlane stepped out of doors. The chief trader's chubby face was stern and his steps were slow and dignified.

"He has a bone in his throat again," Sunfoot said, in Piegan, to Luck. Luck, carefully, did not smile. He knew what the Indian meant by the "bone." It was a reference to a fable which Macdonald had composed, to turn the laugh upon a pompous chief in a threatening situation. A rabbit, said Macdonald, slept and dreamed

that he was a fox; so he caught a large goose, but woke up before he had finished eating it. Thereupon he choked fearfully because the goose's breastbone was stuck in his throat. A beaver, hearing his distress, came up from the bottom of the stream, sat on a log and called good advice to him.

"Go to sleep and dream this time that you are a big wolf and be careful to crunch the bones before you wake up."

The rabbit did so. Then the beaver called to a bull buffalo and told him that his worst foe, a wolf, was asleep on the bank. So the bull buffalo gored the rabbit with his horn and killed him while the rabbit was still dreaming that he was a wolf. A crane standing on the marsh asked the beaver why he had acted in this manner. The beaver replied: "It is just that fools should suffer for their folly." And then, being the most sagacious of all animals, he added: "I myself have never filled my mouth with what I could not chew."

Luck was fond of Bunny; but he secretly admitted that the chief trader wore his dignity very much like that other bunny with a goose's breastbone in its throat which would neither come up nor go down. It transpired that Bunny,

who, on his part, was also very fond of Luck, had been so filled with joy at the boy's almost miraculous escape over the moving bridge of caribou, that he had thought and talked of nothing else and had let the gun in Luck's hand pass unnoticed. He must have seen it, of course, but it made no impression. His eyes and thoughts were concentrated on the beautiful spectacle of the Beloved Child balancing, springing, darting among the branching horns. Now, however, it had come to him with the suddenness of a blow on the ear that, in some unrighteous manner yet to be discovered, the Beloved Child had acquired a rifle!

"William Luck," he said solemnly, "ye have a gun; so *don't deny it.*"

Luck smiled blandly.

"Who would go out to hunt caribou without a gun?" he asked. His eyes, opened wide, were very bright, and innocent. Bunny knew that look. He frowned and pursed up his lips.

"Ay, ay. I've heard that shooting game's done wi' a rifle." His tone was heavy with sarcasm. "What I'm asking ye, and what I'm demanding to know—as chief trader, mind ye—is *where ye got the gun.* I deeply suspect ye put

all your arts to work and cozened it out of Kitowa."

"Oh no. I will tell you the truth about it. This is my own gun which fell into the river the day the bear and I were saved together. My spirit bear told the caribou about it and the caribou fished with their antlers and brought it up." He beamed at the disgusted Bunny. The chief trader looked him over coldly for a long minute and then turned to Sunfoot and asked him what he knew about the rifle. Sunfoot glanced apprehensively at Luck.

"What shall I say? I am sure this is the magic gun which was made by the spirit Man from the Sky in the Assiniboines' country," he said in Piegan. "How shall I answer? For I am an honest man. I speak always one way." By which he meant that he spoke truthfully and not in the "two ways" of the liar.

"What's all this?" Bunny demanded. He knew very little Piegan.

"He asks me if he shall tell you the truth about the gun and I say yes." He turned to Sunfoot and said, "It is true that you are an honest man and can speak only one way. Tell him."

Sunfoot pointed to the vacant camp site on

the east bank, made the sign for "Assiniboines" and proceeded to relate, in sign language, the story of the magic gun. Luck nodded gravely from time to time, and with special emphasis when Sunfoot explained the Beloved Child's possession of the magic gun on the score of his own great spirit powers. As the tale went on in the swift dramatic gestures of Sunfoot, the chief trader's pompous dignity oozed from him in wonderment. Bunny MacFarlane did not belong to the imaginative clan. He was the other type of Scotchman, the matter-of-fact Scot —and there is nothing more matter-of-fact than that in the world. He thought Sunfoot's story the funniest he had ever heard. The honest Indian's solemn fervor, and Luck's grave expression, added to the tale's fantastic humor. He lost control of himself entirely as chief trader. He sputtered, tried to turn the sputter into a derisive snort, but failed, and burst into wild whoops of laughter.

"After this I shall speak only two ways to white men," Sunfoot said, disgustedly. He turned on his heel and strode off.

"Ho, ho! Oh, ay—ho—ye got a magic gun, did ye? Oh, ho! Well, I ken the sort o' magic ye used—ho—ho. Oh, ay! No matter who

holds t'other end of the stick when it breaks, 'tis always the big end that's left in the hand o' the Beloved Child. Ay, the Beloved Child gets all the big breaks. Ho—ho— And ye're quick to tell the tale to the poor savages so that it makes ye seem a bigger shaman than ever—ho—ho— Well, lad, I'll not betray ye to them. I'll never tell them ye charmed the gun away from Kitowa—as I know ye did—ho—ho. Spirit Man from the Sky, making guns by magic for Assiniboines—ho, ho, he, he, tee, hee—" Bunny doubled up; there were tears in his eyes. "Ye've fair given me the stomachache wi' your fooling," he gasped.

Luck beamed. He was more than contented with the outcome. He agreed joyfully to Bunny's suggestion that they go wolf hunting to get fur for his next winter's coat.

Chapter XVII

ATTACKED IN THE DARK

DURING these days while Luck was employing his wits in mystifying both Bunny and Sunfoot about the rifle and increasing—from quite different standpoints—the respect which each felt for him, a conference took place to the north which concerned him vitally. Peter and Jim Saby, two renegade white men, who had once been for a short time with the Nor'-Westers' brigades, were camped beyond the marsh, to hunt caribou. Their band consisted of Indians from several northern tribes. Two of their Crees were distant relatives of Otter Tail's. So Otter Tail's band had pitched camp beside the Sabys' tents, to visit and hunt with their leader's kinsmen. They found there, also, Sitting Fox and his mixed group—clustered about the big tepee where lived the mysterious man who sometimes let his figure be seen from a distance but never showed his face.

One evening Otter Tail sat by the fire with Sitting Fox, the Sabys and a northern Indian named Empty Basket, who was the Sabys' chief hunter. They discussed a question of grave importance; the spiritual conflict between the Man from the Sky and the Beloved Child. It seemed obvious that, large though their world was, it was too small to hold both these magic men. The Beloved Child used his magic to defeat plots against the white men: he worked spells to keep the two races friends. The Man from the Sky promised to obliterate white men from the red men's country, while depriving the red men of no useful thing which the white men had brought. When the white men were gone, his powerful magic would make guns and powder. He was, therefore, a better guide to happiness and plenty than the Beloved Child. But the latter was dear to all Indians, and particularly dear to the Piegans, who were a large and fierce nation and must be won over if the sky man's plan was to succeed.

"The Beloved Child must not be killed but he must be taken away from the Piegans and from the white men also," Otter Tail said. "He and my nephew, Night Swan, are now blood brothers. Let the boy be captured and brought

to his blood brother. Night Swan is already a great dreamer and can work magic. He will influence the Beloved Child to obey the Man from the Sky."

He gestured toward the young Indian boy. Night Swan knelt on the other side of the fire, crouched over a fine white bit of caribou skin. He held his paint stick in his hand. Several horn paint bowls were on the ground beside him.

"Heh! Night Swan," his uncle called to him. He was obliged to call again much more loudly before the boy turned. "We speak of bringing your blood brother to live with you for a time. You will be happy when he comes."

"Yes," Night Swan answered. His eyes were like sparks shining through the blue smoke of the fire. "I am making a new quiver for my arrows. But if he comes I will give it to him." He bent again over his painting. His abnormally keen ears had heard every word of the men's conversation from the beginning; he had only feigned deafness to mislead them. It was wise to let them think him so absorbed in his painting that their voices did not reach him. He listened acutely while they planned the capture

of the Beloved Child. And, as he listened, he painted.

A few days later a band of warriors set off for Isle of Wings. Otter Tail told Night Swan that they went to invite the Beloved Child to join his blood brother. At the last moment, Night Swan ran after them with his new quiver.

"Give it to him from me," he said. "Then my blood brother will surely come. For, see! I have painted on the quiver all the good things we will do together: our hunts, our games, how we shall play at being great warriors and take many prisoners—like my uncle, the brave Otter Tail. And see, here too, is the star trail where our spirits shall walk forever."

"Good." Otter Tail grunted, pleased at the boy's reference to himself. "We shall make a warrior of you yet, instead of a shaman." He accompanied the men a short distance, to give parting words of caution. "Night Swan helps very much, in giving you the quiver. Now you can say that you came to bring Night Swan's present to his blood brother. It is much better than the other story, about swamping the canoe and losing your powder, and therefore returning for more. They might have suspected the

powder story. But none will suspect Night Swan's gift to his blood brother."

"Yes, it is very good," said Empty Basket, who was leading the expedition.

Otter Tail was so pleased with his nephew for his unconscious aid that he ordered his wife to put a rich caribou marrow bone in the fire. When the tidbit was done, and the bone cracked open with a hatchet, Otter Tail himself carried it in a wooden dish to Night Swan, who stood under a birch tree.

"Why do you keep the shaft of a broken arrow among good arrows?" he asked curiously, noting the stick in Night Swan's hand.

The boy slipped the shaft into his quiver and took the dish, with a grunt of approval.

"The arrow of the hunter and the warrior is one piece; who holds the shaft can also touch the dart; *and the way it flies is short,*" Night Swan answered him presently. "The trail over the prairie is broken by water; the star track is broken by darkness, separating stars from stars; the light moving over the ground is broken by shadows; *because the way these things fly is long.* So it is with the arrow of a dreamer."

Immediately after the wolf hunt Luck and

Bunny were busy all day long getting the furs ready to ship. Every morning they looked out, expecting to see some of their friends from Little Fort William camped on the shore, with hobbled pack horses grazing by the tents.

"We're all ready," Bunny said one day, as he and Luck were finishing breakfast. "The horses will be here today or tomorrow for sure. Do ye mind Long Shadow saying, at Christmas, that he'd be wanting ye to go to the buffalo hunt with him and his people this year?"

Luck nodded. The door opened and Joe-le-roi burst in.

"Canoe come," he announced.

"Canoe? Whoever will it be?" Bunny asked, hastening out. Luck followed him. Two Indians called a friendly greeting as they sprang ashore. Luck recognized Lame Crow of Otter Tail's band. The other Indian was Empty Basket, whom he had never seen before. They shook hands with the four inmates of the fort and accepted Bunny's offer of breakfast. Lame Crow explained why they had come. They brought a gift from Night Swan to his blood brother. Night Swan, himself, had painted the quiver and his heart had been so set on sending it immediately to the Beloved Child that Otter

Tail had pitched camp and had dispatched Lame Crow and Empty Basket to Isle of Wings. He laid the quiver on the table. Luck's eyes flashed and he caught his breath; for he knew that there was a message in the colored designs. He remembered Night Swan's promise to send him news by means of a painted quiver!

"Tell my blood brother that when I saw his gift my heart shook like leaves in the wind," he said, throatily. "And that my voice was no longer clear."

"More o' the big breaks!" Bunny mocked affectionately. "What a lad ye are for getting presents given ye! 'Tis a very fine quiver."

He nodded at the two Indians and laughed, as Luck seized the quiver and ran out with it. Empty Basket and Lame Crow grunted their satisfaction.

Luck squatted in a corner of the sunlit yard and studied his blood brother's art.

"Here it begins," he muttered, putting his finger on the shaft of an arrow. "Four stars? Yes, they are camped four sleeps from here. Ten rushes? That is the marsh; and the gun, with four hands holding it, means twenty warriors. Twenty warriors are in the marsh. Ah! two men come to the fort, to make sure that the

four of us are still alone. The point of the arrow—that is meant for me. Yes—yes—" His heart pounded as he went over the whole design again, carefully studying it.

Bunny shouted for him. The two messengers were departing.

"Tell Night Swan that I will send him a gift after I have killed my first buffalo," Luck said to Lame Crow.

After their canoe had passed from sight, Luck called Bunny, Sunfoot and Joe-le-roi into the fort and told them the story painted on the quiver.

"Twenty men will come down on us tonight when they think we're asleep. Those two came first to make sure the pack men hadn't arrived. They will kill you and take me away."

"Ver' bad," Joe-le-roi said.

Bunny's blue eyes snapped.

"The scoundrels! Well, lads, we're five; they're four to one; but they'll be outside and we inside. And we've plenty guns——"

"Plenty Nor'-Westers' guns and one magic gun," Luck interrupted. The chief trader snorted.

"And there's plenty powder for loading the old cannon on the wall," Bunny went on. "And

fourteen savage dogs, too, that'll be more than pleased to help. It could be worse, lads. It could be worse!"

"Do you believe the magic gun will kill Indians? And can it kill more than one man at a time?" Sunfoot asked Luck.

"If it is truly a magic gun it will drive our enemies away without killing them," the boy replied. "Macdonald always says that the Nor'-Westers must do everything possible to prevent war."

Joe-le-roi, who was the fisherman at the post, came by with a roll of line and called Antoine. The two men went out on the river. Luck stood watching them, and wondering what they were about. Antoine landed on the east shore with an end of line, which he fastened to a stake. He drove the stake into the ground. Joe-le-roi paddled across stream and tied the other end of the line to a willow bush on the small clumpy islet immediately north of the fort. The line lay almost on the water. They repeated their movements, stretching a second line above the first.

"That's not such a bad idea," Bunny said, nodding approval. "The Indians will come down in the dark and bump into the lines. Not

likely it'll stop all of them; but it'll pretty surely upset a few and bewilder others."

"What is Joe-le-roi doing now?" Luck peered out at the half-breed, who was passing along the upper side of the lines in the canoe and apparently fastening something to them at short intervals.

"*Fishhooks!*" Bunny roared with laughter. "Ay, ay! The hooks will catch in their fringes and bother them no end." He shouted a word or two of praise.

"I hope no spy has watched us," Luck said. "I believe the two men are satisfied that we suspect nothing and have gone to their camp."

They spent the rest of the day in loading all the rifles in the fort and the old cannon. The cannon was rusty. It had not been fired for so many years, Bunny remarked, that it might "explode all over *us* as well as *them*."

When dark fell Sunfoot went into the yard where the dogs were chained; the three others, with rifles ready, posted themselves in the thickest shadows along the stockade. Not a light gleamed anywhere on Isle of Wings.

The watchers discerned the motion of objects tinted lighter than the night-reflecting stream. The canoes glided down like dim, misty water

ghosts. One, in the lead, hit Joe-le-roi's lines, rocked and swung round; the canoe behind it ran into it and the collision upset both.

"Heh! heh!" Grunts and then frantic splashing sounds came up through the dark. Wilder "heh-hehs!" announced that the fishhooks were coming into action.

"Ver' good," Joe-le-roi muttered.

The swiftness of the tide brought a third canoe into the mêlée. Bunny gave the order to fire. Luck took aim at the tumbling hooked mass and pulled the trigger just as Bunny touched off the cannon. The whole island seemed to rock as the old iron warrior kicked and spat fire and tugged at its chains.

"Ho! Friends of the Man from the Sky!" Luck shouted. "See how *my* magic gun shoots!"

"Heh! heh!" Frenzied shouts answered him and the fire of rifles from the two canoes which had escaped the half-breed's snare.

Now Sunfoot noiselessly opened the gate. He had just unchained the dogs, and he held the lead dog by the collar.

"Food! food, friends!" he said to them. These were words they understood from him, their driver and caretaker. Only a day or so ago, he had opened the gate and said, "Food, friends"

and they had rushed out to the magnificent sport of killing wounded and half drowned caribou in the river. Then, rope-muzzled, with chains and ropes fastened to their collars, they had dragged ashore the deer for their masters' food. Sport and service combined made a perfect day of it for dogs of their spirit! Now, here was more of the same glorious adventuring! They went through the gate, like a mass driven by a typhoon: tumbling and tumbled, rolling and up again, the swiftest taking a leaping stride over the fallen.

The attackers had found out the cause of their trouble now. A few slashes with tomahawks did for the lines; though the hooks continued to give trouble, fastening in flesh as well as clothes. Those Indians whose canoes had not overturned were leaping to shore and firing at the black bulk of the fort, where they could see no one though they felt the bullets which sped out of the darkness. The dogs met them full tilt and knocked most of them over backwards into the river. Into the water the dogs went after their prey, snarling and snapping about the struggling swimmers. The voice of Sitting Fox called to the disorganized red army to take to their canoes and make for home.

"Keep on shooting, but over their heads," Bunny ordered. "The Factor wants no more killing than we can help."

Luck caressed his perfect gun and shot high across the dark water. Indians with gun wounds, and hook gashes, and bitten limbs, fought madly against the delighted dogs. "Heh! heh! huh!" Screams, grunts, splashes, sounded on the black water as the men caught their canoes and climbed in.

"Sitting Fox," Luck shouted, "tell your Man from the Sky what the Beloved Child says. His cunning is like his magic. Both are worthless."

Sunfoot went to the shore and called to his pets more of the softly melodious Piegan words they knew.

"Home, friends! Come—Come—Come——"

Chapter XVIII

ON THE SUN'S TRAIL

NO ONE who looked out over the scene could doubt that there had been a war in the dark. Red stained the green along the edge of the shore of Isle of Wings, where both gunpowder and savage dogs had prevented the Indians from landing. If any of the invaders had been killed, their bodies must have sunk or been swept over the falls for none lay on the river shores. The brave defenders had suffered few casualties. Luck, Bunny and Joe-le-roi were unhurt. Antoine had a flesh wound in his arm. Sunfoot limped from a strained ankle, his dogs having spun him about as they raced out to battle. Toboggan, a big white dog, mostly wolf, had a tomahawk gash in his shoulder. Plenty Smoke, the leader of Joe-le-roi's sled team, walked on three legs. Several of the other dogs licked and snarled over minor wounds. Joe-le-roi was unwounded in body but his feelings were hurt by

the discovery that his fishhooks had been twisted out of all usefulness.

"Ye can't please a half-breed no matter how the cat jumps," Bunny said to Luck. "Joe-le-roi had a grand idea, to tangle the savages wi' fish-lines and hooks; and the idea worked like magic. Wouldn't ye suppose he'd be happy as a chipmunk? Instead, he's mad because his big red fishes ruined his hooks!"

Luck laughed. He was busy fetching out the fur bales. Any hour now would bring the pack train into view. His words were few this morning, because he was thinking about Night Swan's quiver. There were three picture signs on it which he had not explained to Bunny. Those signs told him that there were two white men in Otter Tail's camp and that they were on their way south to the Sioux. The picture of a man drawing his hand across his throat—"Cut throat"—meant Sioux. The hidden man with Sitting Fox and his band was going on past Fort Chipewyan, visiting the Sarcees, Beavers and other northern groups. Night Swan thought that the two white men would also go to Long Shadow's tribe. The Man from the Sky, himself, was supposed to be far to the north.

While Luck was not sure that a spirit man could not really come to earth in a falling star, he doubted more and more that this man had arrived by that route. He remembered talk he had heard at Little Fort William about three bad men—Blueface, Peter and Jim Saby. He felt fairly confident this morning that the Man from the Sky was Blueface and that the two white men sketched on the quiver were the Sabys. What could these three men mean to do but set the Indians against the Nor'-Westers and steal their trade for themselves? The Sioux and the Piegans were none too firm friends. Perhaps the Sabys would turn the Sioux to war against the Piegans, if the Piegans stood aloof from the plot against Macdonald. Luck was anxious to join Long Shadow's people as soon as possible in order to discover the bent of their minds. He rejoiced when he heard the shouts of the horsemen from the bank. His feet sped like wind as, magic gun in hand, he ran down to the last canoe and leaped in. He scolded the swimming dogs for getting in the way of his paddle.

On the sun's trail,
Now on the sun's trail,

I am going.
Heh! heh-eh! heh! heh!

The Beloved Child sang while he helped Sunfoot strap the lighter loads on the dogs, who gasped with eagerness to do their work and perhaps to show the horses that their greater size did not necessarily mean superiority.

"They'll likely come back and burn the buildings," Bunny said, with a regretful glance backward at the small fort where, for a few weeks, he had been a "chief trader."

Luck did not think so. The plotters had separated by now, Blueface—if it were he—going north and the Sabys south. The attack on Isle of Wings had been made only to capture *him.* If successful, the Indians would have killed Bunny and his three servants to prevent news of the capture from reaching either Macdonald or Long Shadow. No; they would not waste their time on the small fur post of Isle of Wings now. Their objectives, he felt sure, were Fort Chipewyan in the north and Little Fort William to the south. His brows contracted in remembering Three Eyes who was always ready to entertain mischievous suggestions. The crafty Blueface had won the help of Three Eyes

before. And Long Shadow, himself a straight-minded man, was completely under the old shaman's influence. Conjecture as he might, however, he could know nothing until he joined the Piegans for the buffalo hunt.

The grass of the prairie rippled like bright, green water under the dazzling sun. The sky hanging from Old Man's shoulders was a vivid blue blanket embroidered in white fleecy saskatoon blossoms. Worry ill fitted such a day. Song was better.

Heh! heh-eh! heh! heh!
On the sun's trail
I am going. Heh!

Shortly before sunset they sighted a cluster of painted tepees.

"Long Shadow's people!" Luck cried excitedly.

Scouts had been on the lookout evidently, for several horsemen dashed to meet them. Curved Horn brought a welcome. The chief trader and his train must feast and camp with the Piegans that night. On the morrow they would journey a part of the way together. Then the Piegans would veer toward the southeast to hunt horses.

Scouts had reported a fine herd in that vicinity.

While they sat around the fire and quieted their appetites—"My stomach," Luck declared, "is like the big hollow log from which the bear comes out hungry in spring"—Long Shadow said that he wanted the Beloved Child to go on the horse hunt.

"There is a white pony with a black face, and feet faster than blowing rain." He smiled at Luck. "He must be your horse. And you must break him."

"Yes, yes."

"Ay," Bunny mocked. "And when ye come riding him into the fort yard, I don't doubt ye'll be calling him a magic horse."

"No doubt he is," Luck answered.

Bunny snorted.

"If I could speak Piegan," he said, "I'd tell about the fight and all that nonsense ye stuffed into simple Sunfoot about getting a rifle by magic and being a spirit man and so forth. For ye deserve to be well laughed at for it. But I'm too weary with packing and hauling and trapesing to work my muscles at it in sign language."

"Better not," Luck said. "If my Indian father knew that Crees had attacked the place where I was, he would dash on north and fight them."

"Ay. That's so. Ye're right." After a pause, he added, "little we thought what the strangers were up to the day we watched them camp. Ye mind, now, thinking one of them suggested a white man?" He laughed. "Ay! How ye tried to coax me into giving ye a gun if ye found out anything about them! Well, ye soon learned ye could move a rock easier than move Mr. MacFarlane—him being chief trader, too! What a lad ye are for getting the big breaks! No gun, said I, and meant it. But when next I clap eyes on William Luck he's riding down river astride caribou antlers and waving a rifle."

"I did a good deed and I was rewarded." Luck beamed. Bunny slapped him on the back and laughed. He supposed that Joe-le-roi or Sunfoot would tell the Piegans what his own tired muscles kept him from talking about, and he asked if Luck thought the foolish savages likely to "swallow it whole." Luck made a noncommittal reply. He felt sure in his own mind that both men were too disturbed by the rumors from the north and the magic gun to be willing to talk about them. Speech involved some responsibility; and they wished to avoid that. So far all seemed to be well with Long Shadow's band. Old Three Eyes' brooding silence might

indicate nothing more than his customary desire to impress visitors.

Early next day the two expeditions parted. Luck rode between Long Shadow and Three Eyes. He chattered away about his life at Isle of Wings, telling them nothing that mattered. Three Eyes made a long, ponderous, mystical interpretation of the episode of the bear on the breaking ice. Long Shadow smiled and grunted with pleasure over the story of the stampeding caribou.

That night, scouts came into camp and held a conference with Long Shadow and the chief warriors. Luck knew nothing about it because he was asleep. According to their report a band of Sioux, disregarding the sanctity of Piegan territory, had rounded up horses in the neighborhood and were now camped in a coulee some miles to the south. They tethered their new horses there in the daytime, while the hunters pursued the herd. The encampment was so well hidden that they left only a few men to guard it. One was a boy about the age of the Beloved Child. The scouts thought it would be a comparatively simple matter to raid the camp and run off the horses.

"It is time to make a warrior of the Beloved

Child," Curved Horn said. "When I was his age I had already taken a scalp."

Long Shadow frowned.

"The Beloved Child is the good fortune of the Piegans; which is more important than taking a scalp. If he were killed, the other tribes who also love him, would make war on us because we had allowed it to happen. However, since we are many and this band of Sioux is small, we will raid the camp and the Beloved Child shall kill this Sioux boy and take his scalp." After a moment he added. "I am very angry because you say this Sioux boy has the white stallion with the black face which we were going to capture for the Beloved Child. I have promised that horse to the Beloved Child and he must have it."

Chapter XIX

LUCK'S MERCY SHOT

NOTHING was said to Luck about the Sioux camp the next morning when he started off with Long Shadow, Curved Horn and a small band of warriors. It was Three Eyes who counselled silence. He pointed out that the Beloved Child knew how strongly Macdonald argued against war. No doubt the white man's ideas also influenced the boy, who spent so much time with him, hearing his words. He might refuse to go if he knew there was to be war. But let him see the foe, and how few they were; let him see their good horses and this boy who had charge of the white stallion; and undoubtedly the blood of the warrior would leap in his veins. He would burn with desire for both the stallion and the scalp! As usual, the superior wisdom of Three Eyes prevailed.

So it was not until they made their swift descent upon the Sioux camp that Long Shadow

told his adopted son what was expected of him. Luck's heart stood still. There was no time for words. They were almost upon the camp.

A shot spanged and grazed Curved Horn's shoulder. Luck saw the Sioux boy run like a flash, leap to the white stallion's back and race through the coulee. With a shout, he gave chase. Long Shadow followed at a little distance. He would not interfere with his son's kill. On and on the white stallion sped and Luck sped his pony after it. The Sioux boy was not astride his mount but hanging at one side of it. It was impossible to shoot at him without hitting the horse. Luck did not mean to shoot. He intended to capture both boy and horse. And he hoped to come up with his quarry before the other detachment of Piegans, which had gone to close the exit from the coulee, could head the boy off. Luck wanted to make the capture in a fair race, without help.

He lost sight of the stallion for a few moments because the path twisted round a bluff and upward through a thicket. Then, to his distress, he heard shouts; which could only mean that the five Piegan braves had already reached the exit and stopped the horse. He saw them at once as he emerged on the brink of the

plain. They held the horse but he saw no sign of the boy. Somewhere on the trail, when the bluffs or trees had screened him for a moment, the Sioux boy had dropped from the horse. Who could even guess where he was now? A skilful scout could hide in sparser cover than this indefinitely; creeping noiselessly, lying still, swinging up into thick branches, utilizing every moment when his pursuers' backs were turned. A pang of grief stabbed Luck. Something about the boy had stirred his admiration keenly. He had thrilled to the grace, swiftness, daring, of his flight on the beautiful white horse. He longed to stand face to face with him and touch him, as a warrior touched a brave foe and became a greater man by doing so. Now doubtless the Sioux boy was doubling back on the trail, semi-circling his would-be captors, seeking a hiding hole from which he would emerge at dark to run, and run, with the night wind, over the prairie under the stars until he found his own people.

Suddenly a sound reached him from a distant part of the thicket: a heavy swish of boughs followed by an animal noise, a half-smothered snarl.

"Heh!" Luck cried and dashed in. He could hear Long Shadow and Curved Horn following him. He plunged on and in a few moments came on a sight which chilled his blood. The Sioux boy, his thigh scarred and bleeding, stood braced against a tree, with his hands about the throat of a brindled wolf. He was trying with all his strength to choke and weaken the beast so that he could let go with one hand for an instant to draw his knife. His veins stood out like cords and sweat ran from him.

"Heh!" Luck shouted again. He brought his rifle up and ran down on them. The boy groaned softly once, not for pain but at sight of his captors. Luck thrust the nose of his gun against the wolf's heart and fired. The big body jerked and plunged to the ground, dragging the exhausted boy with it. Shaken with the tremendous effort of the struggle though he was, he felt for his knife to strike one blow for his liberty, but his fingers could not close on it. His gun lay on the ground. Curved Horn sprang for it and also seized the knife. Luck helped the boy to his feet and flung his arms about him, embracing him like a brother.

"He is my friend and goes with me," he cried to Long Shadow.

"Yes. He is a brave boy. Even I would think myself brave to seize a big timber wolf with my bare hands. And I am a tall and strong man, while he is only a boy."

He held out his hand in the sign of friendship. Then he told his men to bring the wolf to camp because the boy must have its pelt.

Long Shadow lifted the wounded boy to the back of the white stallion, which he led. Luck rode beside his captive. Once in camp, the Piegans washed his wounds and gave him food before they put any questions to him. Then Luck, by signs, asked his name.

"Young Moon," the boy replied in the same way.

"Who is your father? He must be a great warrior," Long Shadow asked.

Young Moon answered that his father had been a brave warrior, but was dead. He had no family. He suffered shame now because he had lost the horses which he was set to guard. The Piegans were clever to have come on the camp without the Sioux scouts seeing them.

"Have you been given your warrior's name yet?" Long Shadow cracked a marrow bone for him, in speaking. Young Moon shook his head. "I will give you your brave's name. It is

Clutching Wolf. Stay with us and I will adopt you. The Beloved Child wishes it."

Young Moon turned a startled glance on Luck.

"Is *he* the Beloved Child? My people desire very much to capture him because he brings good fortune." Then he pointed out, with surprise, that Luck's eyes were straight and not set aslant like all other people's. He was interested to hear that palefaces had such eyes. Some of his people had seen white men long ago, but he had never seen any.

"I shall live with you and be your brother," he said to Luck. "And I will go with you when you leave the Piegans to visit your white father. Long Shadow has given me a name; so do I give you one. I call you He-Looks-Straight. Because you saved my life and your people are generous and kind to me, I will give you my white horse for your own."

"Will you take my spotted pony in exchange?" Luck's eyes shone like sunlight. "And when we go to Little Fort William I will ask my white father to give you a new rifle. We will hunt together, each riding the horse that belonged at first to the other."

Young Moon stared hard and gravely at him

for a moment. Then his face brightened into a smile.

"Your straight eyes are peculiar but I do not mind them. All that you say is good. You speak one way and so do I. Speaking one way makes true friends. I will learn your language so that we can speak with words. I am sorry I could not save my people's horses, because that was my duty. Otherwise, everything suits me very well."

"A friend is much better than a scalp, my father," Luck said to the chief. "The Beloved Child brings good to all; and to himself also." His eyes danced. Long Shadow smiled. He looked into the pot.

"Good!" He grunted. "There is still another marrow bone to stop a boasting mouth." He fetched it out and handed it to the Beloved Child.

Next day they turned homeward with their horses. After a week's visit with the Piegans, Luck and Young Moon went on to Little Fort William.

Chapter XX

LUCK'S BUFFALO HUNT

THE Sioux boy was a perfect playfellow. Whatever Luck most wanted to do was always Young Moon's chief desire also. They swam and canoed together, raced their ponies over the prairie, played ball, wrestled. The summer passed so happily that Luck—just because he was happy—almost forgot the Man from the Sky. No more warnings came from his blood brother, Night Swan. It was easy for a thoroughly contented boy to believe that all danger was past. He could not pierce the miles to the Piegan village and see the Saby brothers smoking and talking by the hour with old Three Eyes. Nor could he look far north where Blueface cozened the tribes. He did not know that Night Swan had a message to send him but no messenger. No Crees were coming south from Otter Tail's band at that season.

Luck was happy not only because of Young

Moon. There was a chance, Macdonald said, that the map maker, David Thompson, would call at Little Fort William on his way to the mountains. The word Oregon was often mentioned. It began to have a magic sound in the ears of the Beloved Child—who had been a wanderer since he could toddle.

"It will be a long and dangerous trail into Oregon, my lad," Macdonald said, with a smile. "And ye'd best not set your young heart on wandering there. For I couldn't allow ye to go. And what would Long Shadow think of it? And Kitowa, too; and all the other red men of the North?"

"You must tell me more about Oregon another day," Luck answered. "Now I have to go and spear fish with Young Moon. I have heard strange things about David Thompson from Long Shadow. One day Three Eyes was very angry because Long Shadow's son, Tail-in-the-Wind, said that the Star Man—so they name him—was a more powerful shaman and nearer to the Great Spirit than Three Eyes."

Macdonald smiled.

"Ay. Davy Thompson's the most religious man ye could meet. He takes all the direction of his life from Heaven—from the Bible that's

ever in his pocket, and from the sun and stars over his head. Bit by bit, year by year, he's bringing the North out of mystery and putting the lines of it on maps. A great man; yet he was a lad of your years when he came to the North, younger than ye are today. He came out as a poor boy apprenticed to the Hudson's Bay Company, with nothing but his clothes, and the little black Bible in his pocket."

"Why did he leave them and join the Nor'-Westers?" Luck asked.

"Because he wanted to do more exploring and mapping than they cared for. And that was just what we wanted. I'll explain why another time. He showed me what he wrote in the journal he keeps daily on trail. It was his entry for the date when he joined us, being the twenty-third of May, 1797. Said he: 'This day I left the service of the Hudson's Bay Company and entered that of the company of the merchants from Canada. May God Almighty prosper me.' And he's been prospered in the bringing of knowledge to men, doing a work that shall long outlive him. No other brigade leader has his gift for handling men of all color and stripe."

Young Moon shouted a wild "Heh!" He

stood on the shore waving paddle and lance. Luck ran to join him.

"Mind now! Bring me a juicy fat fish for my supper!" Bunny called to him, passing across the yard. Bunny had just come back from the big fish-drying camp, some miles away. Luck laughed, promised *two* fat fish, and sped on and into the canoe which Young Moon was launching.

While they paddled the half mile to the cove where trout loved to feed, he talked about the Star Man and asked Young Moon if he would like to go with the Star Man and the Beloved Child to Oregon. Young Moon said that he would like to hear more about it before he decided.

"You do not enjoy picture writing as much as I do," Luck answered. "I wish to learn his kind of picture writing, which my white father calls 'maps.' All these 'maps' he sees first in the sky, where they are reflected, as we see our canoe and our faces in this quiet water. The Piegans have told me of the strange charms he carries and which he uses to look through at the sky both by night and day. That is how he is able to see the maps up there, which we cannot see. They say, too, that the Great Spirit

speaks to the Star Man when he looks at the sky through these charms, and tells him things no Indian can know."

"You say he does only good, and no evil, to men with his magic? Then he is a different shaman from any I have known." Young Moon now began to look out for trout. In a moment he added in his customary matter-of-fact way: "Yes. I will go with him to Oregon. You wish it; and I see nothing against it."

"He will teach us to read the picture writing in the sky," Luck said, eagerly.

"You will like that. I don't care about picture writing. I like to hunt. If Oregon is a good game country I shall have nothing to complain of, and will like it."

In the fall the Piegans came to Little Fort William, asking leave to take the Beloved Child away until spring. They wished him to spend the fall hunting season, and also the winter trapping season, with his red brothers. Macdonald hesitated; and the faces of Long Shadow and Three Eyes darkened with suspicion.

"I don't like to let ye go for so long, lad," the Factor said, doubtfully. "I'd feel better if they'd take your friend, Young Moon, too. But they say the hunt will take them too close to the

Sioux country and they fear the boy would run off to his own kin and give them news of the Piegans' whereabouts."

"Young Moon would not do it. But it is useless to try to explain that to Three Eyes. He is an old man with a sour mouth. Of course, if the Sioux knew where to find the Piegans they would try to punish them for having stolen their horses and captured the boy."

"Ay. 'Tis reasonable enough. Ye wouldn't be entirely out of touch with us all the while. The Piegans will surely meet Thompson on the river; for that's his route to the mountain pass that he'll have to cross to get into Oregon."

Luck's eyes brightened. It would be much easier to join the Star Man's brigade out there on the river, than to slip away from Little Fort William; even had Thompson been coming to the fort, which was now more than doubtful. He thought with a thrill of the great river in Oregon, called the Columbia, which the Star Man would explore and map from its headwaters to its mouth in an immense salt lake named Pacific Ocean. What sights! What adventures! What mighty readings of the stars!

"How are the Indians there called?" he asked.

"Oh, there are many tribes. Chinooks, Nez Percés, Flatheads, Shoshones. Ye must have seen some of them when ye were a wee lad. If the Piegans told the truth about where ye came from, 'twas from Oregon."

"Well, I must go with my red father now. He wishes it, and he will think you are no true friend if you refuse."

"All right, laddie. But, remember, I'll be anxiously looking for ye in the spring."

Luck explained the matter to Long Shadow and was pleased to see the dark expression lighten.

"Good. He also loves the Beloved Child." Long Shadow understood.

"I am sorry your Piegan people will not let me go to the hunt," Young Moon said.

"Do not be troubled. You can easily follow our trail, letting no one see you. Instead of coming into our camp, go to the Star Man's camp and hide in one of the boats, or some other good place, until you see me arrive. Then I will explain everything to the Star Man, and we will go to Oregon."

"Heh! Your thoughts leap from one thing to another like a fish after flies. Since I see no objection to what you say, I will do it."

The best buffalo grounds were almost directly south in what we call the Dakotas. But the Piegans knew that the Sioux were hunting there. If they met they would fight about the little matter of the stolen horses, which would interfere seriously with laying in their stock of meat for the winter. This year their wise weather prophets had told them that winter would come early and be long and cold with very deep snow. They must kill and dry a great deal of meat if they did not want to be reduced to chewing their moccasin strings before spring. To avoid the vengeance of the Sioux they turned west along the southern branch of the Saskatchewan River.

They pitched their camp at a place which Long Shadow had named Drowned Knife, because he had once lost a knife in the river there. Leaving the women and children and old men in camp with a few warriors to guard them, they went out on the plain and constructed a rude corral.

They had not long to wait. In the crystal light which cut out the line of the low hilltops against the bright sky, they saw a dull yellowish dust cloud rise above the ridge. Then the hill

line lifted and swayed blurringly, like a skipping rope twirled very rapidly. There was a sound as if war drums were beating just under the sod; a slow, uneven thudding that rose to a muffled roar as thousands of hoofs crested the hills and descended. Indeed, it looked as if the hills themselves were descending in a shaggy, dark mass shot through with the gleam of horns and the tawny-red hue of the calves.

The Piegans put their horses into action, riding along the flank of the huge buffalo herd. First came a dozen of the best hunters, then Long Shadow, with the Beloved Child riding beside him on his own white pony, and the other braves dashing along behind. Near the entrance to the corral, Tail-in-the-Wind, Long Shadow's son, and the cleverest animal impersonator in the tribe, was running about in a crouching position with a calf's hide wrapped around him and bleating distressfully. One of the old bull leaders heard him presently, stopped and observed him, and then led part of the herd toward him. Tail-in-the-Wind backed into the corral and, as the old bull and his friends trotted after him, he ran through and out at the other end. Now the hunters separated. A party dashed, firing, into the herd and stampeded

them away from the corral and closed the entrance. The others surrounded it and the trapped animals within.

It was not what we would call a hunt, but a slaughter. In an hour or a little more, the Indians were at work inside cutting out the buffalo tongues and skinning the carcasses.

With the tongue of his first buffalo dangling from his saddle, Luck rode back toward camp with Long Shadow and a small party of the hunters. As they topped the last hummock, the chief reined in sharply, with a word of command. Alert and still as hawks hanging in the air, only their fringes rippling softly in the breeze, the Piegan horsemen and the Beloved Child watched a fleet of canoes round a spit of shore and moor below the camp at Drowned Knife.

"The Nor'-Westers flag!" Luck exclaimed excitedly.

"It is the Star Man. Come," said Long Shadow and led the way, with Luck galloping alongside.

"Oh, my father!" Luck cried. "I am going with the Star Man. To Oregon, my father! The country far south where I came from. Oregon! Oregon!"

The mere sound of the word exhilarated him.

He shouted it breathlessly. Long Shadow pulled on the rein so sharply that his horse sat back on his haunches. With one hand he seized the boy's bridle and swung the pony around, nearly jerking Luck from the saddle.

"What does the Beloved Child say?" he demanded.

"I am going over the mountains with the Star Man, far south to Oregon where I came from." He stopped short, seeing the black scowl on Long Shadow's face. "Oh, but I will come back some day," he added.

"You shall not go," Long Shadow said sternly. He lashed his horse and rode on. Luck followed more slowly. His high spirits were somewhat dashed by Long Shadow's anger, but he was quite determined to go to Oregon with the Star Man.

Thompson, surrounded by a group of old braves, with Three Eyes at his left, was gravely greeting Long Shadow when Luck came up.

"This is my son, the Beloved Child," said Long Shadow, proudly.

Luck put his hand in the one Thompson extended and said nothing, so great was his astonishment. He had pictured this famous man as mighty in stature, much taller than Long

Shadow and Macdonald, who were both big men, and with a face and a voice that struck fear to one's heart; for it was said that no man, red or white, ever refused Thompson obedience.

What he saw was a little man with black hair, like an Indian's, and black eyes, rosy tanned cheeks, a shy, boyish smile, and a soft voice. Stories told him about Thompson passed through Luck's mind: feats of courage Macdonald loved to relate; the curious fact that the Nor'-Westers' brigade men, who were the hardest fisted, hardest working crews in the north, would leave any commander of their own stripe to go with Thompson; and how his men—French-Canadians and Indians—gathered round him in camp every evening while he read to them from the Bible and explained passages in their own languages. Luck knew, too, that these men with Thompson now were only a few out of the many who had clamored to go with him across the Rockies and south into a strange country and unknown perils, discounting danger from the start because of his leadership. This was great Davy Thompson, the Star Man—and he looked like a nice boy one might romp with!

They were seated on the ground now. Long Shadow asked where Thompson was going with

so many packs of goods in his canoes, since it was too early in the season for the Indians to have any furs to trade.

Thompson, who knew only a little of the Piegan tongue, unrolled a small tanned beaver skin, scraped clean of hair, spread it on the ground, and quickly sketched across it the two branches of the Saskatchewan River and the mountains bounding what is now the southern part of Alberta. He marked the pass by which he would cross the Rockies. Below, to the west, he drew a bit of coast line and the Columbia's mouth. Then he inclosed all the unexplored country between in a circle and, by signs, said it was unknown.

"Oregon!" said Luck softly, his eyes shining, as he spoke.

"Yes." Thompson looked up and smiled. "When I come back I'll be able to draw a clear map of it."

"I've copied all your maps at Little Fort William," Luck told him proudly.

"Have you?" His black eyes kindled. "And can you draw pictures? Like this?" Smiling, he sketched a buffalo head in one corner of the pelt, then a man's, then a tiny canoe, quickly one after another.

"Turn it over and let me write on the other side, and I'll show you my picture-writing," Luck cried eagerly.

"Then show me." The Star Man passed the pelt to him. His expression was pleased and interested as he watched the boy's deft hand. First Luck drew an Indian head wearing a chief's headdress, then a bow with three arrows launching from it. He snatched a charred stick from the fire and blackened the arrows.

"Black arrows—and three from one bow," Thompson mused. "That doesn't mean hunting. It means that the chief is sending out a war party. Am I right?" Luck nodded, delighted. He reached out a hand for the pelt, then drew it back before he spoke.

"You want it? Here it is." Thompson gave it to him.

"Go!" said Long Shadow harshly. He had watched the little scene proudly, but now his jealousy got the better of his pride.

Luck rolled the pelt, thrust it inside his shirt, and bounded off. He was hungry, and he smelled buffalo tongues cooking where Long Shadow's wife was busy over a fire before the chief's tent. Since the Star Man would not leave until the next morning, he would have

plenty of opportunity to inform him that a boy named William Luck was going to Oregon with him. After a splendid meal he wedged himself between the back of the tent and a fallen tree and went to sleep on a comfortable bed of pine needles.

Chapter XXI

THE ARROWS IN THE PASS

THE harsh voice of Three Eyes within the tent wakened him. Luck opened his eyes, but made no sound. When people were angry, he always preferred not to attract their attention to himself. The glow in the air told him that the sun was setting. He could hear distinctly what the old medicine man said, and the words made his heart stand still—as he would have expressed it in the Indian idiom.

"Last year I said, 'Kill the Star Man, because his star magic is evil.' But you would not listen," Three Eyes said.

"We knew you were jealous because his magic was stronger than yours," Long Shadow reminded him. "But now, truly, he has put a spell on the Beloved Child to take him away."

"Yes. He will take the Beloved Child far south among bad people. So the blessing of the Great Spirit will depart from you," the shaman

went on, his voice rising to a chant. "The Sioux will come up and defeat you. The Crees will come down and cut off your feathers like the tails of jackrabbits. You will run like squirrels. You will take many pelts to Little Fort William and receive few good trades for them. The Star Man will take all the best goods over the mountains to trade with the strangers, instead."

From the grunts which punctuated Three Eyes' remarks Luck guessed that there was quite a gathering in the tent. Now the warrior, Curved Horn, spoke.

"It is true," he said. "His canoes are filled with blankets and many other good things."

"The winter will be long and cold. You will shiver in your thin and worn blankets. But your enemies to the south will be warm in the Star Man's many good new blankets!" Three Eyes jeered. "Piegans, you are fools!"

"Make a wise plan and we will follow it," said Long Shadow.

"To-night, when the Star Man sleeps, let warriors go along the north side of the camp. The moon is full and will light their path. Let them run swiftly and sleep little till they come to the narrow hole of the pass. There let them lie hidden, on both sides. And they shall kill

the Star Man and all who are with him when he enters the pass with the packs. They must leave not one alive to return to tell the white father at Little Fort William. When the Star Man comes not back after a long time, the white father will believe that the strange people to the south have killed him. The Beloved Child will stay in the north. The Piegans will have many good new blankets."

"It is a wise plan," said Long Shadow. "Go now, Curved Horn, and tell all the warriors. When the Star Man sees in the morning that we are few, whereas to-night we are many, I will say that a hunting party has gone over the hills to build corrals. And I will send the Beloved Child with Tail-in-the-Wind to the hunt, so that he cannot go with the Star Man."

Luck lay still until he knew that the men had dispersed from the tent. Twilight had come down, and one star hung low in the blue sky when he crept cautiously out of his pine bed. He knew that he must warn Thompson, and also that he must do it in such a way that the Piegans would never suspect him. Therefore it would be best not to go to Thompson's tent. He must not be seen talking to him again—that is, not alone; and he would not dare try to tell him his danger

in the presence of any Piegan. He must do it somehow through a messenger. But how? He sat long by the fire before the tent, thinking.

Kill the Star Man, the great picture-writer who had given him the beaver skin map, which was already his proudest possession! He unrolled it and looked at it again. And then, suddenly and quite naturally, Luck saw the way to warn Thompson.

Lying flat on his face before the fire, with a bit of the red paint which was used to decorate his own countenance, as well as Long Shadow's, when he traveled with the Piegans, Luck sketched a chief drawing his bow on the blank shore of the river, at their camp site, on the Star Man's map. Then, in the mountain pass which Thompson meant to traverse, and where Long Shadow's braves would lie in wait for him, he sketched three arrows, and blackened them with a charred stick. He knew that Thompson would understand. But what would the Star Man do? In the morning, of course, he would break camp and go on westward; because, if not, the Piegans might suspect that he had discovered their plot, in which case they would probably kill him at once. Even if he went on, a day's journey, it would be dangerous for him to turn back and

encounter the Piegans again, no matter how plausible a story he might tell them—since Three Eyes had aroused not only their superstitious fears but their greed for the many blankets.

Luck remembered that there was another pass to the north. No white man had yet been through it; but Luck had once been in its mouth with some grizzly bear hunters from one of the northern forts. He had only a vague idea of its position in relation to the north branch of the Saskatchewan, but he thought that the Star Man must surely know how to find it. He could ask the Great Spirit and the Great Spirit would write it in the stars for him. Luck ran a red line along the base of the mountain range and made a deep V about where he judged the pass should be.

He saw the shaman and Long Shadow coming up the bank, and quickly rolled the map and hid it inside his shirt. He jumped up and ran to meet them.

"My father," he cried gayly, "I cannot go to Oregon to-morrow, because to-morrow I will kill ten buffalo!" Long Shadow smiled. Even Three Eyes' moody brow cleared. "But, my father," Luck continued, as a daring thought flashed into his mind, "let us now go and smoke with the Star Man so that when he makes his

star magic to-night he will have good will to us and not hurt the hunting."

Long Shadow looked questioningly at Three Eyes, who nodded assent. Luck darted into the tent for the peace pipe; then he and Long Shadow walked along to Thompson's camp. As they drew near, Luck saw the voyageurs squatting or lying by the fire, while Thompson read aloud from an open book on his knee. The Star Man's mellow voice, ringing with conviction and command, reached his ears with these words:

"*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day . . . For he will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*"

At a warning sign from a voyageur, who had caught sight of Long Shadow moving among the tents, Thompson rose. He held the Bible in his left hand, open, his finger marking the place. He extended his right hand to Long Shadow and invited him formally to be seated. Long Shadow lighted the peace pipe from the Star Man's fire and, after puffing through it and waving it toward the four points of the compass, offered it to Thompson.

"I will hold the book," Luck interposed quickly; and deftly slipped the Bible from

Thompson's hand. He moved back gradually on his haunches till he was behind Long Shadow's shoulder, just out of his sight. Then, as fast as his fingers could move, he folded the beaver map as small and flat as possible and closed the Bible over it at the psalm which Thompson had been reading. A lightning glance under his lashes showed him that Thompson had seen; and Luck made a swift negative sign to prevent him from speaking, as he laid the book to one side on the ground. The brief ceremonial visit was soon over and the visitors returned to their own camp.

Sleepless from excitement, Luck lay under his buffalo robe by Long Shadow and heard, from time to time during the night, the faint whisper of pine needles and dried grasses under the passing tread of moccasined feet, and the answering whisper of weapons brushing a bough or sweeping against the buffalo-hide tent wall. By one, twos, threes, the warriors were gliding silently away from the sleeping camp as the moon rose to show them the way. He imagined them crossing the prairie and fearing to run upright lest some wakeful voyageur might see them. The moon would show men crouching and running low and lean like wolves, the sign of war

streaked on their faces. Long Shadow was listening, too, he supposed. Luck knew that he was awake because he had felt Long Shadow's hand tucking the buffalo robe around his feet. It had grown suddenly much colder. The warriors would have their journey for nothing, he mused contentedly. It was too bad, though, that he could not go to Oregon to-morrow with the Star Man. But some day he would go to Oregon—Oregon—his own country. At least he had saved the Star Man's life; and also he had prevented his friends the Piegans, and Long Shadow, whom he loved, from doing a very evil and foolish thing.

The chill dawn light began to creep in at the open tent door. Luck snuggled his head deeper into the woolly warmth of the buffalo blanket.

"I am the Beloved Child. I bring good luck to all," he murmured to himself in the Piegan tongue. Presently he fell asleep.

Chapter XXII

YOUNG MOON KILLS

"BUT for me, Long Shadow, you and the Piegans would soon be wiped out by the white men."

Three Eyes was speaking inside the tent. Luck heard him as he paused immediately outside to adjust the ankle pieces of his moccasins. They were very fine moccasins in the northern style, a present from Kitowa's wife. Long Shadow grunted.

"Yes," Three Eyes went on. "When all white men are gone and the Man from the Sky has returned to the Country of the Souls, and I am the great shaman of all the tribes, then you will be fortunate. I will make you a great chief, above all other chiefs. You will owe all this to my wisdom and my magic."

"Huh!" Long Shadow grunted again. "I do not know what to think. I am sure of nothing. Last winter you said that Sabys and Blueface were bad men, when they ran off, leaving the

furs. You said your magic drove them off. When Sabys came in the summer I intended to kill them. Then they said that they brought a message from the sky for you. And you became their friend. I do not know what to think about all this."

He came out of the tent.

"Beloved Child, where are you going?" He called to Luck who was moving away.

"My father, I wish to shoot. There are many buffalo birds," Luck answered.

"Huh." Long Shadow nodded.

Luck had comfortably forgotten the Man from the Sky during his happy summer with Young Moon. He was very ill-pleased to hear of him again, and in this fashion.

"Huh! The bad Saby brothers have been with the Piegans," he muttered, frowning. "They have made Three Eyes believe that he will become many times greater than he is already. And, of course, his spirits have said 'Yes; it is true'! Foolish spirits and foolish men together make trouble."

He sat down on a bluff of the river. It was a high bluff and he felt sure that Young Moon would see him. It was necessary now to get in touch with his Sioux friend at once and explain

to him why they could not go to Oregon with the Star Man. He had been perched on the bluff for some time, and had seen and heard nothing, when a whisper sounded near him. He turned quickly. Young Moon lay flat in the grass beside him.

"I have traveled a long way on my belly, like a snake," the Sioux boy said. He turned over and lay on his back. "I slept last night on the bluff over there, in a tree."

"You must have lain as still as a branch when the wind is dead, not to fall." Luck grinned.

"Huh! I lay still but I also tied myself to the branch. It was good that I did so; because I woke suddenly when men went past the tree. I looked down and saw Piegan warriors. Do you know where they went?"

"Yes." Luck slipped down into the grass beside him. He did not wish any one to see him and perhaps come from the camp to talk to him. This conference with Young Moon was important.

He went on to tell what had happened. Young Moon grunted.

"I am not offended with you; you are not to blame," he said. "But if I had known that I was

not going to Oregon I would not have taken the trouble to bring my wolf skin."

"Yes, that is too bad," Luck said, conciliatingly.

"Well; I do not let such things worry me. You must have noticed that I am not easily upset."

Luck agreed. He was turning over in his mind the question of the Man from the Sky. Should he confide fully in Young Moon or not?

At that moment shouts reached them from the river. Then came the sound of singing. The two boys jumped up and ran along the bank to watch the Star Man's brigade set out for Oregon.

"That is he," Luck pointed at the figure of Thompson.

"Heh! A small man! Yet every one talks of him. I am as tall, though I am not yet fully grown. I am glad to have seen him, because I can now think better of myself."

"Always remember how you got that wolf skin; then you must always think very well of yourself."

"That is true," Young Moon replied simply. "However, many other things have happened to me since I fought the wolf. I have been adopted by Long Shadow and become your friend, and I have seen white men. All these happenings

were extraordinary and they cause me to forget sometimes how brave I was to clutch a wolf with my hands."

"Heh! There is Long Shadow. He walks swiftly. What shall we tell him to explain why you are here?" Luck said hurriedly. "If he should be angry—? And Three Eyes, too."

"I thought about that, too, at first, before I had seen the little man who is so great. Now it is no matter. I know what I shall say."

The chief and the medicine man came up. Three Eyes was mumbling. Long Shadow's face was clouded with anger.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded harshly.

"Hah! heh! First the Star Man would steal the Beloved Child." Three Eyes pointed at Young Moon, threateningly. "Now the Sioux boy will run off with him to the Sioux. Hah!"

Luck glanced anxiously at his friend. Young Moon stood very erect. He ignored the skinny finger of the old shaman, almost touching his breast. He looked the chief steadily in the eyes.

"Where is the Sioux boy?" he said. "I am the son of Long Shadow. My war name is Clutching Wolf. Clutching Wolf has come to hunt buffalo. It pleases him to do so."

Long Shadow's face softened. A gleam of pleasure perhaps of amusement too, showed in his eyes. He grunted.

"Long Shadow is glad to see his son again," he said presently.

"Good. When do we hunt?" Young Moon relaxed nothing of his new dignity. Three Eyes was still muttering. Long Shadow turned to him.

"All good feelings come from the heart," he said. "But suspicion comes, crooked and twisting, from the head. The heart is better than the head. Your heart will be glad when you see Clutching Wolf kill buffalo."

"Three Eyes, I will also make your stomach glad," Young Moon said, in his matter-of-fact way. "I will bring you a buffalo tongue."

"I hardly know you now," Luck whispered to his friend, as they walked after Long Shadow and Three Eyes toward the camp. "You changed completely and very suddenly while I looked at you!" His bright eyes flashed with mischief.

Young Moon answered him with entire seriousness.

"It was because you showed me the little great man. He has been very useful to me. Some day

I will make him a present. Of course, if he is killed by Curved Horn, or by Oregon people, I cannot do it."

"What will you give me for showing you this man, who has made you grow so great all at once?" He chuckled.

"Do you think you should receive something? I had not intended to give you a present. But perhaps you are right. I will let you know later, when I have thought about it."

"No. I am only joking." Luck laughed. "I would give you any good thing I had, if you wanted it; and for nothing."

Young Moon regarded him intently for a moment before he spoke.

"I saw long ago that you have a good heart. But you must have seen, on your part, that I am proud, as a great warrior's son should be. How can a man be proud if he is not also generous? That is, of course, impossible. Let us exchange gifts therefore, respecting each other and ourselves. So I will give you something, later, for having shown me the small great man who has been so useful to me." He went off to look over the ponies and to choose his mount for the buffalo hunt.

Luck said to himself that he had been using

his "white mind", in his spontaneous words to Young Moon. The Sioux boy's philosophy of gift exchange was the one he himself had advanced in arguing with Bunny about getting a new gun. It was certainly an advantage to have two minds—white and red—but he thought it odd that his white mind should have acted in his discussion with his Indian friend. "For, really, I believe in the Indian way, more than in the other."

They hunted together for several days at the corrals where Tail-in-the-Wind lured the wild cattle. But, one day, before they set out, Young Moon said:

"Let me have your bow, for it is stronger than mine."

"Take it. But why do you want a bow when you have a good rifle?"

"This easy way of killing does not satisfy me. My father, Chief Heavy Wings, was a great hunter, using bow and arrows, for he had no gun. When the Piegans make me a chief, I shall take his name. I shall be Chief Heavy Wings. It is time, therefore, that I began to prove that I am a great man's son. Tell this to Long Shadow and say that I must not be interfered with."

"He is brave and therefore has the right to do as he pleases," Long Shadow said to Luck, as they watched the young Sioux ride down upon a group of grazing buffalo.

The animals took fright and, for some moments, Young Moon was completely lost to sight in the cloud of dust which the animals raised. Then, from their station on a hill, they saw him again. He was well toward the front now, racing after a young bull, his quiver not on his back but hanging at his side. His only hold on his horse was by the grip of his knees.

"I hope he is watching that bull's eyes," Long Shadow said. While he was speaking, Young Moon launched his arrow into the buffalo's side. It did not reach the heart; perhaps the boy had not the strength to send it to the goal. The bull turned. Swifter than the wink of an eye his head lowered, his horns went under the pony, and the little horse was tossed through the air. Luck's breath stopped while he looked.

"Heh! Heh!" he heard Long Shadow's amazed exclamation. Young Moon must have seen his peril, the fraction of a second before it arrived, and jumped. He was directly between the fallen pony and the bull which was charging upon it. The watchers saw him, with his bow

full stretched; from their post, it looked as if the dart touched the charging beast before the shaft left the bowstring. They saw him leap aside. The bull plunged on and pitched to the ground. Luck was racing now beside Long Shadow, who was making for the spot at full speed. Their advent on the field sent the rest of the herd off in the opposite direction. When they came up Luck saw the bull's head lying against the pony's flanks. The pony was dead, too, its neck broken.

"Now you have done enough," the Chief said. "I will send men to fetch your meat. Get up on my horse, my son. You are brave and clever; but, after this, use your rifle."

"I have lost my horse," the boy lamented.

"I cannot complain. If you had not lost other horses before, I would not now have you for my son." Long Shadow smiled, as he made this allusion to his capture of the Sioux boy.

"Oh, my father!" Luck cried breathlessly. "Give him the best horse you have! And many other presents!"

"Huh! Must I make myself a poor man to satisfy you? We shall see." Long Shadow spoke gruffly but Luck could see that he was very pleased. The next day Young Moon

received his horse, a swift and beautiful jet black pony. Long Shadow held a feast at which the flesh of the Sioux's buffalo was served. The Beloved Child and Young Moon ate and danced and sang all day. At the close of the celebration, Curved Horn and the war party which had gone out to end the Star Man's journey, come into camp.

"Heh-yeh-y!" Old Three Eyes cried, dancing forward and extending his skinny hands. "Give *me* the Star Man's scalp! Give *me* the Star Man's scalp, and *I* will dance!"

"It is still on his head," Curved Horn answered. "He went by another way. He has gone north."

At once the whole camp was in an uproar. The daring exploit of Young Moon was forgotten. The Beloved Child was forgotten. Old Three Eyes called on his spirits; and his spirits ordered the Piegans to pursue the Star Man with their full strength. Curved Horn and his companions ate and then lay down and slept, while the others took down the tepees, and hastened preparations for breaking camp. They would start as soon as the moon was up and travel that night until it set.

"This is foolish," Young Moon said. "Three Eyes is really crazy but Long Shadow does not know it. Since the Star Man goes north into Night Swan's country I hope Night Swan will dream of his danger and warn him. Perhaps, when we find his trail, I can run away some night and tell him."

Luck could not answer for the moment. The memory of the dream told to him by his blood brother in the marsh rushed upon him like chilling water, sounding in his ears and making his skin creep. The snow . . . arrows like whirling flakes . . . and he, the Beloved Child, grown giant-like . . . and three great bears standing on his palm . . .! It was time now to tell Young Moon about the Man from the Sky, because Three Eyes was muttering and raving of him as he capered about the camp. Young Moon listened in silence to the story as he and the Beloved Child rode side by side under the hanging star trail.

"All red men like stories. I do, myself. And it is amusing to believe what the story-tellers tell us when we sit round the fire at night," he said. "And it is often amusing, also, to pretend things, as in the Bird Dance and the Buffalo

Dance. I have always been interested in animals. Once I found a litter of wolf cubs and I brought them home and had them for my dogs. I have tamed bears also; and once I had an eagle. So I know animals; and they also play and dance and love to pretend things as we do. Sometimes they pretend for fun, when they play with you. But generally it is for a purpose—to protect themselves while they get something. I think shamans pretend a great deal at all times. They do not pretend only in fun; they get power and gifts by it. This Man from the Sky has made up a fine story, such as red men enjoy. Even I enjoy the story, but I do not believe it. When you say that you decided, at Isle of Wings, that you also were to be a spirit man, and tell me besides what Night Swan dreamed, I enjoy it but I do not believe it. I am like that; so do not be offended."

"No. So long as you agree with me that all this wrong must be stopped, and will help me."

"Heh! Of course I will help you. You are my friend. Did you notice what a long speech I made just now about these matters? I have never talked so much at one time about anything before in my life. Perhaps I will become one of the great orators of the council of Piegans some

day. Although I really hope not," Young Moon added. "It is more my way to say what I mean at once and be done with it."

Presently Luck heard him emit a deep contemptuous grunt, and asked the cause of it.

"I am thinking how foolish men are to go to war about campfire tales. Huh!"

Chapter XXIII

BLIZZARD

ON THE second day out snow whirled down upon them with a wind from the north. They fought wind and snow in pitching their camp that night. Several days later they turned their horses loose in the territory of the most northerly tribe of their nation, cached most of their goods, and took to their snowshoes. The air was dense, a waving white cloud. They wore the long narrow Athabaskan snowshoes for open country—five and a half feet in length. A snowshoe's length apart, each warrior could barely see the man directly in front of him, so thickly the flakes fell. They moved slowly, blindly, in the direction of the north gap in the Rockies.

The fall of flakes thinned and then ceased for a time. Gray days and clear days followed, with dropping temperature. Sometimes the wind swept over the blank space of the prairie with the fury of a stampeding herd, its edge sharp and

piercing as angry horns. On one such day they saw a war party come over the eastern ridge. It turned out to be Otter Tail's band of Crees, reinforced by the Saby brothers and their Indians and the Man from the Sky himself—Blueface with his mixed group headed by Sitting Fox. The two war parties drew together and went into council. Otter Tail and his allies, inspired by the Man from the Sky, were marching to attack Fort Chipewyan. Kitowa of the Crees, and Kakama, the Assiniboine chief, were still dubious about the wisdom of making war on the Nor'-Westers. They had not joined with Otter Tail and the white men; but they would come into the alliance if the attack on Fort Chipewyan were successful. It was news to the Cree war party that Thompson was in this part of the country. After debate the council decided that the Crees should go into camp, while the Piegans hastened on in pursuit of Thompson. When Long Shadow's band had obliterated the Star Man and his brigade they would return, divide the Star Man's goods with their allies, and join in the attack on the trading post.

While the men debated and smoked, another council was held in secret in the shelter of a

snowdrift. There the Beloved Child and Young Moon conferred with Night Swan.

"I like you," Young Moon said, "but your eyes really alarm me. They seem to see things which do not stand before us on the snow."

"This is the place and the time of my dream," Night Swan replied, "when I saw myself wounded almost to death. If my eyes seem strange to you it is because I look through death to the Power Beyond; as one looks through water in a pool at other life beneath the water. This look into the Power Beyond makes me strong to know that only beauty is behind me and only beauty is before me."

He went on to say that Otter Tail had a grudge against the Sabys because of ill conduct on their part, and only refrained from killing them because their help was needed in the attack on Chipewyan which was the strongest of the northern forts. Otter Tail had asked the Man from the Sky if the Sabys would be killed, too, when he kept his promise to kill "all" white men.

"What did he say?" Luck asked, keenly interested.

"His answer pleased my uncle," Night Swan said, slowly, with emphasis.

"Heh!" Young Moon exclaimed. "They should be told. At once our strong foes become weak when they turn on one another."

"The Man from the Sky is very angry with you," Night Swan said to Luck, "because of all the things you did to him. The Sabys are angry, too; because of the fishhooks and the dogs, which hurt Sitting Fox and Empty Basket very much."

Luck grinned.

"It was your picture writing on the quiver that made all their troubles."

"At present we three can do nothing," Young Moon said. "The Beloved Child and I must go with the Piegans, to-morrow, to the pass. I will try to run away and warn the Star Man. See what you can do to make trouble among these bad men."

Next morning the Piegans pushed on toward the mountains and, at noon, came on Thompson's trail. Two nights later they camped on a height of the pass and saw the gleam of his fire above them. They were jubilant because of the news several of his Indian packers, turning back, had told them. So terrible was the climb over the deep snows, that all his Indians threatened to desert him. Even his Canuck brigade men

begged him to turn back; for the pass was unknown, no man ever having crossed through it.

"The trail goes up high over snows which never melt, so high that, if he reaches to the top, he can touch the stars with his hand," they said. "The snow is so deep that the dogs seem to swim in the traces."

In the morning light, the Piegans pressed on and, from a jutting snowbank, saw their quarry almost within shot. The brigade had halted. From the Star Man's gestures it was evident that he pleaded with his men to go on. He turned and saw the Piegan warriors mocking him with savage signs. They began to utter the war whoop. Long Shadow and Three Eyes, ordering the Beloved Child to the fore with them, led the dash around the jut.

"My father, this is evil. It will bring ill fortune!" Luck cried. Then he stopped as if frozen in his tracks, and pointed, unable to speak. Midway on the slope between the Piegans and Thompson was a mass of boulders—*framing a great head.* From these rocks a huge grizzly bear slowly emerged. It was followed by two others; the largest bears Luck had ever seen in his life. The Piegans halted, silenced by the

uncanny sight of bears roving at that season. The three grizzlies came out and stood together across the Star Man's tracks. They stood there motionless, facing the Piegans.

"Turn back, Piegans!" Old Three Eyes trembled like a leaf. "The Great Spirit has sent the bears to protect his son, the Star Man. Listen to my wisdom and turn back."

"Turn back," Long Shadow commanded. "We have done evil. We should have heeded the Beloved Child. He said it was evil. We cannot kill the Star Man. He is the son of the Great Spirit who speaks to him through the sun and the stars and tells him things no red man can know."

"Bears! Great fierce bears sent by the Great Spirit!" The Piegans muttered. "We will perish!"

"Heh!" Young Moon came closer. "Your son, Clutching Wolf, asks why the Man from the Sky did not warn us to let the Star Man go? But no, my father. He said, *Kill the Star Man.* He has no wisdom. He is not our friend. He let us anger the Great Spirit."

"He is not from the sky," Luck chimed in eagerly. "He cheats us. He is only a bad white

man, and not a spirit man at all. Can he call bears to help him? *Where are his bears?*"

Long Shadow turned a gravely troubled look on his brother.

"What do you say to all this?" he asked.

"Let us go down." The old man's voice quavered. "The sky darkens. Clouds move like great bears in the sky. Go down! Go down!" He started totteringly forward on the steep snowy slant. Silently, with what speed they could make on the narrow footway, the warriors followed him.

"Bears! Who ever saw this before?" The warriors asked one another.

"My father, now you will listen to me." Luck kept close to Long Shadow, speaking emphatically. "Macdonald is your true friend. These bad white men are not your friends; they are only Macdonald's enemies." He went on, then, to tell the story of the night war at Isle of Wings. "The good white men of the Nor'-Westers have taken care of the Beloved Child, who brings good luck to all. These bad white men, who are now with Otter Tail, wished to kill the Beloved Child."

"Do not consult again with your spirits. They deceive us," Long Shadow said to Three Eyes,

harshly. His face was dark with wrath. His eyes flared. "Keep close in my tracks," he said to Luck. "And tell Young Moon to walk in them behind you. In bad places of the earth Long Shadow leads by a safe way. This I can do for my people and my sons; though, in other things, I am sometimes misled."

The council in camp that night was brief and stern. The Piegans would not go against Fort Chipewyan; and they would demand that the Crees surrender Blueface and the Sabys; or fight to retain them. Snow was falling when they took the trail in the morning.

Meanwhile distrust of the Piegans had developed in the allies' camp. The Star Man, Otter Tail mused, was carrying many rich packs of goods for trade with the Indians of Oregon. His braves also talked of these goods. Otter Tail began to doubt that the Piegans, once possessed of the Star Man's packs, would return to share them with Crees; or would care about risking their lives and their new wealth in an attack on Fort Chipewyan. He broached the subject in council with the other leaders and found that the Man from the Sky, the Sabys and Sitting Fox had, each and all, arrived at the same con-

clusion. The Sabys were now very anxious men. Night Swan had dropped several hints to them of the treachery which Blueface planned against them in compliance with Otter Tail's demand for the extermination of "all" white men. They wanted to get their share of Thompson's packs and then slip away some dark night while the Crees slept. Blueface feared Luck's influence with Long Shadow. The boy, who had thrice made a fool of him, might induce the Piegans to go directly to the fort and give warning of the attack. Perhaps they had not gone after Thompson at all? He did not know that Night Swan had talked with the Sabys, but he feared mischief from the young dreamer too. More intelligent and alert than the Sabys, he did not doubt that Night Swan's painted quiver was responsible for the failure of the attack on Isle of Wings. For different reasons, then, the allies were of one mind in regard to pursuit of the Piegans. They set out for the pass with all speed. A blowing, blinding snowstorm caught them in the entrance; but Otter Tail led on upward against it.

The two bands came together on a broad cliff, with a blizzard swirling around them

"Why are you here?" Long Shadow demanded. His voice, harsh and hostile, increased the Crees' suspicion. Otter Tail, in a tone as unfriendly, replied that they had come to help carry the Star Man's packs. In that case, Long Shadow, said, the Crees could turn back again at once. The Star Man had avoided the Piegans, and escaped. There were no packs to carry. The Crees drew apart and conferred. Luck, at a touch from Young Moon, climbed up the overhanging bank. Young Moon had his bow and arrows. He knelt just over the Cree band, his eyes searching for the false Man from the Sky. Luck was looking anxiously for Night Swan. The blizzard wrapped and unwrapped the groups of men like immense white blankets lifting and falling. He could not see Night Swan. The Crees came forward again threateningly.

"We know that you lie," Otter Tail cried angrily. "You have taken the Star Man's goods and cached them on the trail behind you."

"Who says 'lie' to Long Shadow?" the Piegan chief retorted. His warriors pressed around him. Old Three Eyes dashed forward shrieking.

"Three great bears! The Great Spirit sent three great bears to protect the Star Man!" Chanting, prancing, gesticulating, the crooked

old figure whirled in the driving snow. "Crees save yourselves. Kill the Man from the Sky. He deceives you."

A shot spanged out of the white density behind Otter Tail. Three Eyes' body pitched down at Long Shadow's feet. A long moaning cry of grief and fury broke from the Piegan chief and swelled into the war whoop.

"Heh-yeh! Hey-yeh! Heh-yeh-y-heh!"

Curved Horn and the warriors took up the battle song and dashed upon the Crees. Bullets were of little use in the thick swirl of snow. It was hand to hand fighting with tomahawks, clubs, rifle butts. Grunts and cries, the clash of weapons, sounded faint and futile in the drumming roar of the wind, which was increasing in velocity. Not even the man nearest him saw or heard Sitting Fox as he lost his footing and went over the brow of the cliff into white space. No one saw the Sabys slip away and run as if all the white bears of heaven were after them.

Blueface had shot Three Eyes. But the real wrecker of his scheme, he knew, was not the old shaman but William Luck. He edged about the mad mêlée looking for the Beloved Child; and Night Swan, sensing his purpose, followed him. Above, Young Moon watched for Blueface. Blue-

face saw Luck a moment before Young Moon caught sight of him. Luck, searching vainly for Night Swan, saw nothing but the whirl of men and snow, with the Crees breaking and giving way. Only the warriors of Otter Tail's village stood staunchly with their leader to face the Piegans. The mixed bands collected by the Sabys and Blueface had been fleeing by ones, twos and threes since the battle began.

Blueface saw Luck and started to climb, crawling to one side and keeping hidden under the shelter of the rim. Night Swan shouted and leaped upon him so suddenly that he knocked the rifle from his hand. With the swiftness of a rattlesnake striking, Blueface whipped out his knife and plunged it into the boy. Night Swan fell backward.

"You'll dream no more," Blueface snarled. He lifted his head to say it; only a few inches, but the incautious gesture gave the patient Sioux the target he waited for. The bow twanged. Luck had seen Night Swan at last, at the moment when he fell with the knife in him. He leaped to the fallen body, regardless of the fighting about it. He knelt and lifted his blood brother in his arms. Amazed cries sounded in his ears but he did not know what caused them. He did

not see the Man from the Sky, dead now as his plots, swing by on the impact of Young Moon's strong bow, with two slender feathers sprouting from his brow. The force of the blow and the pull of the long dart at the back of his head sped the body on, the way of the heavy wind, over the cliff.

"My father!" Luck cried. "Help my blood brother!"

Forgetting their strife in their utter astonishment at the false prophet's end, Crees and Piegans stood together, looking into the bottomless depths of the swirling shrieking blizzard. Luck's shouts brought Long Shadow and Otter Tail to him.

"Fight no more," the Beloved Child pleaded. "Help my blood brother."

"Tell me truly who killed my brother, Three Eyes," Long Shadow said to Otter Tail. "I will demand recompense from him, but will make peace with you."

"It was the Man from the Sky," Otter Tail answered.

"Then we will make peace."

The Piegans searched in vain for the old shaman's body. The wind and the snow had covered it, perhaps; or one of the enemy had

pushed it over the cliff. The two bands together hastened on the descent to the prairie. Young Moon and the Beloved Child bore Night Swan in a buffalo blanket. As suppliants now, not invaders, Crees and Piegans turned toward Fort Chipewyan with the wounded boy.

"Though Three Eyes was often wrong, and I was wrong in following his counsel, yet I feel a great gap in my breast because he is dead," Long Shadow said to Luck. "He was my brother. It is natural that I mourn for my brother." He trudged on ahead, breaking trail.

Luck bent to catch the faint sounds which came from the lips of Night Swan, whose piercing brilliant eyes were open and fixed on space. Looking through what was to him the tenuous veil of flesh, to the Power Beyond, Night Swan chanted of beauty behind and before him on the eternal path of the spirit—the Star Trail that is without beginning or end.

Something seemed to break in Luck's breast, to loose him into a larger freedom within. He looked at the snow-lashed figure of his friend, Young Moon, who walked carefully ahead, carrying the other end of the blanket. Young Moon had saved his life because he had made the saving of it his one duty that day, with never

a thought of his own. That was Young Moon; seeing one thing to do and never counting the cost. His eyes dropped again to the ethereal face of his blood brother, wounded for his sake. The snow seemed to shut the three of them in a little space, all vastness shut out, lost. But, for a moment, he did not see the snow. He saw again, northward, the last wide arc of sky. His heart leaped with a prophecy. He would go there—on and on to where the Star Trail touched the earth—beyond the most northerly point reached by the Star Man; and he would search there, as Thompson had done in the south, for the maps in the sky, and draw them with the colors of stars on beaver parchment. The Beloved Child would bring good again to his people—marking the Star Trail upon the earth.

EPILOGUE

A Letter to Macdonald

RESPECTED SIR:

I have the honor to enclose the copy of the map of the far north that was made by Mr. William Luck, who—as I have before related—surveyed the same and opened trade there, and is a very valuable man also with the Indians; he being an intimate friend (what's called by the savages a blood brother) of the Cree leader, Night Swan, and a boyhood playmate of the most influential Piegan warrior, Chief Heavy Wings Young Moon, that succeeded your friend, the old Chief Long Shadow, on death last winter of the latter. In a word they are the triumvirate of the North as I don't doubt the Romans would say. Ye will be interested to learn, Mr. Macdonald, how Mr. Luck took to maps and survey instruments, which was through the influence of Mr. Davy Thompson who, as ye often proudly recalled, made the first maps ever made of this part of

the world and also of Oregon and was nigh massacred by the Piegans in Athabaska Pass in midwinter, he being the first man to cross it and name it and set it on a map. About the which, I feel constrained to relate the following incident, which came to be known after ye had left the North, though ye may have read it in Mr. Thompson's report, for 'tis in his journal. In the depth and height of the snows, over seventeen feet deep, he saw the Piegans on his trail with hostile intent and many men deserting him for terror of the unknown, when—as he thought without rhyme or reason—the bloodthirsty savages turned back: and when he returned, though it was years later, he asked why and Long Shadow, then living, told him three huge bears came out of the rocks, which the Piegans thought were sent by the Great Spirit to protect him; all of which Mr. Luck, then a lad, saw, and confirmed, when Mr. Thompson spoke of it, though never a word the lad said to us all those years, he being closer-mouthed than a trap. Mr. Luck could not rest but he must survey and explore and make maps to finish the far north that Mr. Thompson had to leave uncharted. All of which he learned to do and now does do yearly. Ye recall, Sir, I had the lad with me at our little fort

Isle of Wings the first year I was chief trader. Even today he has a casual easy way of addressing a man in high official capacity, calling me Bunny the way ye did yourself, Mr. Macdonald, before ye returned to Scotland and were then Factor. But he means no insubordination by it and I take no offense though 'tis an odd way to call a Factor, which I am, Sir, by your kind influences with the Company in my behalf, yourself knowing my worth by experience more than others. Mr. Luck was pleased with what the geographers of the scientific society had to say of his other maps which I sent ye. If you can get their good words and compliments on the enclosed and relay same to reach here by Christmas to surprise him, I will take it as a personal favor to me. (Though all he'll say of it is: I am the Beloved Child and I do good to all, so all good comes to me; which is Indian paganism and no longer to be considered by an enlightened gentleman in Edinburgh like yourself.)

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your humble and obedient servant,
Thomas McNab MacFarlane,
Factor.

Little Fort William,
May 1st, 1826.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

David Thompson is the only historical character in this book. The incidents related here about him are true, with the exception of Luck's part in them and the warning of the blackened arrows. "Red Man's Luck" is a story and not a study of Indian customs and beliefs, though the effort has been to present the few fragments of these correctly. Luck's daily life is typical of the young frontiersman's in the Canadian Northwest before towns dotted the land. In some respects it is not unlike the life of the fur trading frontier during my own childhood farther north.

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER.

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